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The man she loved, her only hope of help, had betrayed her. Then, she learned the terrifying truth about the "friend" she had trusted!

BONUS FEATURES Gothic Roundtable4

Your Future in the Stars



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Gothic Roundtable

Welcome, Gothic Readers!

hanks a million! Your response to the first Tiese of GOTHIC TALES OF LOVE was simply great! All your letters are greatly appreciated, and your kind reception means more than we can say. True to our promise to make this space truly a "Roundtable" expressing your comments

and questions, here goes Mrs. J.L., Atlanta, Georgia, writes, "I just love everything written by Victoria Holt, and certainly enjoyed 'The Legend of the Seventh Virgin' in your first issue. Now, I wonder if you could solve a mystery for me! I've never seen a picture of Victoria Holt, and I've heard not only that this is not her real name, but that she is a he? Is this true?"

Yes-and no. Victoria Holt is not the real name of this very fine writer. But let us assure you that she is a very real lady, who lives in London and spends much time at her country home in-naturally -Cornwall. She prefers to protect her private life by using a pseudonym, and so far, has succeeded admirably-perhaps because she's such an expert at

plotting mysteries! Ms. E.D., Philadelphia, Pa., writes, "What a pleasant surprise to find your new magazine at my newsstand! Though I like the full-length gothics, I found your confensed versions of fine poyels a very convenient way to enjoy them when one hasn't much time to read, and you've done a great job of maintaining the full flavor and excitement of the originals Of course, your attractive low price is appealing in these inflationary times, too. You asked us to request our favorite writers-one of mine is Norah Lofts. Could you tell me something about her, and whether you might be able to feature her work in a

We're glad you asked-because one of Norah Lofts' most thrilling stories, "Out of the Dark." is on our schedule for the next issue (watch for it

at your newsstand in June) Unlike Victoria Holt, the attractive Ms. Lofts isn't shy about her identity. She lives and writes in Suffolk. England, Though known primarily for her biographical poyels of such subjects as Anne Boleyn ("The Concubine") and Katharine of Aragon ("The King's Pleasure"), she entered the field of suspense writing with a tale of modern witchcraft, "The Little Wax Doll," and finds it very much to her liking. Millions of readers promptly found her

books in this vein very much to their To those who sent requests for other popular writers, we hope to

bring you all of them, sooner or later, in future issues. Including Barbura Cartland, Marilyn Ross, Monica Heath, Mary Linn Roby, and more. Oh yes after reading "The Possession of Tracy Corbin"-

she'll be with us again, too In case you're wondering what your fellow members of our Roundtable are like, we can give you a pretty good idea now. In age, they range from young girls in their teens, to mothers and great-grandmas. And though gothics are usually thought of as "women's books" you'd be amazed at the number of men who read them avidly, too (though they may not always admit #1). But young or old, men or women, all these readers have one thing in common -they're demanding, and discriminating. Any confirmed gothic fan simply won't accept anything second-rate Stories must be well-plotted and logical, as well as suspenseful. "Please don't give us cheap sex and thrills," one reader warns, "What we want is a really absorbing story, well told. Your first issue was fine-keep up the good work."

We'll do our best! Again, thanks for your encour







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April—May opportunitiesover the next few weeks to make to make the weeks to make contact with a number of people who can help promote your goals.

On the job, advancement is in the air. A superior you believe has overlooked you now takes a strong interest in your future. Don't resist his attenties to guide you. You can greatly benefit by his direction.



TAURUS (April 21-May 27-day) A state romance dies hard. Seek out the company of the state of the company of the state of t



GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Set aside some time for travel before summer. Getting away from it all—vern for a day or two—will give you fresh insights, and you will be better equipped to resolve an old but persistent conflict. Friends admire your mellowed outlook and value your judgment highly during this period.



CANCER (June 21-July 22). Someone from the past re-enters your life this Spring, Avoid plunging headlong into intimacy with this individual. You'll find this is one relationship that can not be picked up where it left off. Pay close attention to your health during the final days of May. A nagging minor complaint could turn serious if you refuse to give up damaging habits.



LEO (July 23-August 22): Show loyalty to a loved one now. Your support could help pull him through a crisis. If you are tempted to criticize, think twice. You will gain nothing by undermining the efforts of those close to you to achieve emotional stability. Take care of routine matters on the job and leave the close, detailed work to others.



VIRGO (August 23-September 229: Late April evenings are favorable for romane. If you are married, your spouse is unusually attentive now. Let him know how much his little gestures of affection mean to you. Don't worry too much about debts incurred during the first quarter of the year. A small legacy will see you through until May, when your economic situation begins to ease up.





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YOUR FUTURE —



LIBBA (September 23-October 22): You'll be plagued with a host of more ills this Spring if you don't find a way to dispet the present stored inside you. Take extreme measures to avoid friction, especially at home. If possible sede seaser from everyday concerns, and don't let guilt overtake you. A mini-vacation is something we are all entitled to periodically.



SCORPIO (October 23: November 22): An influential acquaintance pushes you cut into the limitely. Bask in it. Recognition is all the more rewarding for having been so slow in coming. You feel encouraged to press even harder to achieve gain. Avoid putting pressure on someone close to you. Hidden resentments could surface and cost you a considerable sechack.



SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): The first of the month has you in the doldrums. A period of freedic activity gives way to fastigue and mild depression. This is not the time to launch new projects, but consider making small changes in your daily routine. During the latter part of April and into May you feel refreshed and receptive to new ideas. Pay special heed to some sound financial advice from a colleague.



CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19): You have been avoiding a long-overtule confrontation with an associate. Don't be affinid to come to grips with what's troubling you. Taking a fair but firm stand pow will help you avert future crises. Entertain lawishly and go out of your way to make a shy guest feel at case. He may reciprocate with a small but important favor.



AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18): This is a fine time to sort outbills and documents. An item you've been searching for turns uppered to the property of the search of the search of the search of the up. Best on the place turnecessary strain on your budget. If you are considering a move, delay your decision for a short time. You'll need your present eash reserves to help lighten a friend's burden.



PISCES (February 19-March 20): Force yourself to be a little daring, seen flamboyant. Consider a major overhual of your life style, and once you've made the decision, don't hold back. A more vibrant, spontaneous side of you surfaces. Well-wishers appliand the new you. In love you could outwit a long-time rival and emerge triumphant. This is a happy, creative time for Pisces.

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imagine the curiosity, the erroy of your neighbors as they webth you grow strewbornes on a pole trettle or terms. Imaging the reterest and explorent as they watch this righly to/saged plant reaching vigorously upward. Imagine your own delight as you self letsurely walking through your garden picking real red strewberries from your own exotic climbing strawborry plants . . . picking delightful testing strawberries right off the vine . without having to wash off the dirt . . . and ropping them into

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Terror At Delson Woods

The mansian was magnificent. Her mather-in-law had welcamed her warmly, though she wasn't expecting a bride, Still, Michelle felt uneasy. The servants were hastile. The girl next daar had believed Tim would marry her. Then the terrible "accidents" began to happen - and she realized, with harrar, that her new life had turned into a threat of deathl

By SUSAN RICHARD

The winter sunlight spilled over the once-elegant Tudor house, now an Adirondack resort for a steady stream of skiers. I stood at our bedroom window-modernized into a vast expanse of Thermopane to take advantage of the magnificent view of mountains, snow and sky-while Tim packed away the contents of the medicine clost in the hathroom.

For four days this had been our boneymoon home, Four perfect days, after a prossic wedding ceremony at City Hall in New York, with my roommate Carol and ber intern fiancé standing up for us

With a sense of loss I looked away from the outdoors, and focused on the bright, cheery room. The furniture was Colonial maple. The colorful patchwork quilt and oval booked rue lent a charming warmth. The remains of last

night's fire were a deep red glow in the grate. I didn't want to leave. Panic brushed me as I envisioned walking into the fine old house 50 miles above Quebec City that was bome to Tim. Walking in to be presented to his mother-who didn't know I existed.

Why did nanic almost inundate me when I considered moeting Tim's mother? Because Tim loved her so deeply? Was I afraid I'd lose in the comparison? Tim's mother was such an efficient woman, Running the house at Nelson Woods. Managing the paper mill. I

operated on a different wavelength. I'd never be the exemplary bousskeeper, I adored being a nursery school teacher. The woman executive scene turned me off. "Hey, look what I found." Tim's hive eyes were mock-

tricks revenue that we has both my the prair of variouse area

"Oh. Tim." I smiled runfully. "Sorry you married me?" "You're going to he happy at Nolson Woods," Timpromised, suddenly serious. "You won't miss New York."
"Til he too husy to miss New York." I strived for effervescence, "With the cottage to get into shape"-Tim had told me the guest house hadn't been lived in for years-"and my little nursery group to plan-But Tim wasn't hearing me. He was staring into space A dozen times these last two days I'd talked to Tim with-

out eatting through to him. He's upset about taking use home to his mother. I told myself. Why doesn't he phone Nelson Woods, tell her he's married? It's awful to walk in cold this way! "Okay, let's ret cracking," As swiftly as the wall be-

tween us had been erected it came tumbling down. "Let me out our bacs into the car...." He was sliding the manicure seissors into the overnight bag, "We'll have breakfast Tim scooped up the two valies. I followed him into the hall, down the narrow, carneted stairs that led to the main

floor. With unexpected hunger I snifted the aroma of hacon sizzling in a skillet, hot rolls browning in an oven, coffee perking. We beard the clatter of silver and china being set up in the dining room downstalrs. At the bottom of the stairs Tim took advantage of its

deserted state to brush his mouth linguringly against mine. I sensed a quiet urgency in him that made my beart pound. He was untight about bringing me home Tim and I were meant to meet. In Paris in July-it sounds like a song. Of course, I was out of my mind to guest all that assess on the ransweek London-and-Paris

tour. But Laura and Pat persunded me to so with them From TERLOR IT NELSON WOODS, by Syste suchant Copyright * 1973, by Saxon Richard Reported by permission of Whener Paperback follows

in a matter of minutes. Because I was destined to meet Tim. Kooky, the way I'd come up from the Metro at the St. Michel station and got separated from Pat and Laura. Momentarily panicky at the prospect of getting back to our pension on my own. Walking up the broad Boulevard St. Micbel, too upset to be properly charmed by the picturesque sweep of hookstores and sidewalk cafes. And then I'd literally walked into Tim.

Tim's mother was his whole family. His father died when he was 11. He had no sisters or brothers. Both parents had been only children-there were no aunts or uncles such as I have, though mine were scattered too far away to fly in for our hrief wedding ceremony. Tim's mother lived alone at Nelson Woods with a domestic staff

that had been with the family for years. "My, you're pensive," Tim joshed when Lillian left.

"Of meeting Mother?" He lifted an eychrow in reproach, "You two will hit it off great. When she sees my beautiful, fair-haired bride, when she sees those gorgeous brown eyes," he teased, "she'll say I've done well. I told you-she's been trying to marry me off for years." Actually. Tim hadn't been home much these past years. He'd gone to college and graduate school in Montrealclose enough via superhighways to make it home on occasional weekends. Then he'd gone to Paris to study. He hadn't been bome at all during the months he'd been in

New York I wasn't alone, I suddenly realized, in dreading the coming confrontation with Mrs. Nelson. Tim, for all his

Tim this way. I wouldn't worry about the meeting with his mother. That was still several hours away We hadn't passed a car for miles, I realized all at nace as I spied a gleaming red snowmobile skimming over the whiteness of the fields. What a shocking change of page for a girl brought up in the clatter of mid-Manhattan traf-

Solicitously, Tim broke the silence between us. "Warm "Delicinusly. The scenery is breathtaking." Don't let Tim know the uncase that's riding over you We began to climb again, slowly but definitely. Tim

swung off onto a secondary road before we came in th La Malhaie. From his tense grip on the wheel I guessed we were approaching Nelson Woods. "The side road there, Michelle-" He cleared bis "The same round there, remains the village. The plant is

situated right at the edge." His mather's-the family'spaper plant. "The next left takes us up to Nelson Woods. "This acreage along here-on both sides of the roadbelongs to the estate," Tim explained. His mother held the estate in trust. Hoon her death. Tim would inherit

Nelson Woods, Some day, I suddenly realized, we would he wealthy. "The driveway is about a bundred yards abred." In the distance now I could see the very large, very tall silhouette of the house "Tim. it's enormous." I hadn't realized the house would be so large. I felt small, insignificant. Oddly alarmed. "The view of the river is magnificent," Tim said. I

flinched. He didn't notice, "When I was little, I used to be scared we'd all be blown into the river every time a bad Why didn't Tim call his mother, and tell her that he was bringing me home

as his bride? Suddenly, I realized he was as tense and nervous as I . . . Fortified by the hearty breakfast and two cups of coffee we started out for Nelson Woods. In the comfort of the metallic gold Volvo, I leaned back and tried to relax. Snow-wrapped mountains an hoth sides shead of us reached imposingly into the faintly ominous gray of the sky, which so bour earlier had been golden with sunlight. I'm fascinated at moving into French-speaking terr tory." I bubbled, "I'll bave a chance to talk French

Tim grinned "The French they speak up there isn't like the French your mother taught you," he warned, "You'll find out," Tim sighed. I saw his hands tighten on the wheel. We bad recently discussed the political troubles in Quebec. He was upset that the pravince bad seen vinlence. Tim sb, the unloved minority in Quebec.

again."

trying to say," I pursued earnestly, "is that I feel a kind of ethnic closeness to the Quebecois." Tim knew my mother had been born 25 miles anuth of Paris. "It's exciting for me to be among French people." But in Paris I'd been just another American tnurist, to be gouged just like any other American. And my hushand and my mather-in-law were English.

"Mother doesn't speak a word of Freuch." Tim warped. "She's made a point of not learning. We've had some occasional problems in the plant the last three or four ears," be conceded sumberly, "though nothing serious. The real trouble has been in the cities." His right hand left the wheel to draw me close, my head against his shoulder. For new it was enough to be close to storm came alone." I smiled with a sudden tenderoess for the small boy be had been. "There was always a tree or two struck by lightning. Up there the thunder sounds personally vengeful. It was strong fare for a small boyand an only child at that-to live at Nelson Woods alone with adults

Tim carefully turned off the ice-coated road into the driveway. The house was completely different from what I had expected. To me a Victorian house was something out of Hawthorne, with rambling, ornately decorated porehes surrounding its exterior. Something quaint, demanding indulgence.

There on the hill overlooking the St. Lawrence-I shuddered when I considered the length of the drop from house to river-stood a strangely forhidding mansion. Dark red hrick walls broken by patches of stone and half-timber. The hipped, slate roof, with elegant wrought iron gutters, "Tim. I'm not going to rush out to join the F.L.O." No, that sounded too flip, I rebuked myself, "What I'm was cut by innumerable Dutch gables and dormers, sugsesting endless rooms within. A tall, lean Irish setter, barking lustily, darted forward

through a Tudor arch at the side of the bosse, toward the rear. The arch formed a small porch. The setter charged toward the car "Rusty!" With a broad grin Tim brought the car to a

halt, pashed the door wide, stepped cautiously out on to the crunchy whiteness. "Hi, Rustyl Hi, boy!" Cautiously, I put one hooted foot, then the other into the snow, closed the car door and walked gingerly around

the front to the other side, where Tim roughhoused with the setter. "Tim, you didn't tell me you had a dog," I reproached, offering myself to Rusty's ecstatic, slobbering affection,

What a marvelous surprise!" Tim's mother exclaimed. But she had turned pale, and her hands trembled. Why was I so frightened? Why did I want to take Tim by the hand, and run?

"I never thought of it." Tim chuckled. "Rusty's part of Nelson Woods. Mother bought him as a pup five years ago. Hey, fellow, cool it!" he chided because I would have fallen from the impact of a fresh, joyous assault if Tim hadn't caught me. "Rusty!" A querulous woman's voice called from the

doorway on the norch "What are you carrying on about?" "That's Dora." Tim slid an arm around my waist as we walked toward her. "She's too near-nighted to recognize me from this distance. She's worried about Rusty-he's trained to attack." I stared at Tim in shock, then warily regarded Rusty. "Up here-isolated the way we are-it's a necessary precaution," Tim explained matty, "Rusty

takes commands from anyone regularly a part of the household." "Mister Tim!" Dora shricked, her voice a strident blend of astonishment and delight, "Mister Tim!" She was movine with awkward haste toward us. "We weren't expecting you for another week yet!" Tim closed his arms affectionately around Dora's ample.

radded frame, and kissed her briskly. "Dors, I kept thinking about your cooking," Tim teased. "And I couldn't wait another day." "Your mother's in the library. Just wait till she sets to me. I smiled tentativel

"Don't say a word to Mother," Tim ordered with mock sternoess. "I want to surprise her." hair Tim had dispresented, while the three of us moved to

scolded, more from habit than in anzer, when Tim held the door for us to go inside.
"Come along, Michelle." Avoiding Dora's questioning eyes, Tim reached for my hand Down the ball I heard a woman's voice. An unexpectedly musical voice with a crisp English accent. It

was more strongly English than Tim's accent—or was I just accustomed in Tim's speech? "I know I must enlarge the plant to keep up with com-

petition." Claire Nelson was saying, "but it makes me sick to be hit with this awful inflation just at this time." Tim winked at me, moved toward the open door. I was conscious of Dora trailing us with an odd air of anxiety. She kept up a pretense of scolding Rusty, who was nuz-

ding his head beneath my hand.
"I don't mind." I insisted. "I love does." "Mother-" Tim paused just inside the door. "Look what the snowstorm just blew in." Over Tim's shoulder I saw a tall, compactly built, re-

markably handsome woman rise in astonishment from a black leather chair set before a rouring fire. She strode lithely toward Tim in a smart black pantsuit that was striking by contrast with her snow-white, severely coifed huir. Despite her fifty-odd years, she was in excellent eyes on you." Dora's eyes moved fleetingly—curiously— shape. She was probably very much at home on the ski slopes. Her colorful winter tan suggested this In a tapostry-covered chair with its back to the door

sat a slim, honey-haired girl who swung around now with "You'll be doing that," Dora assured him drily. With an eager smile. She half-rose, then froze in position as her one squat-fingered band she smoothed the wiry gray eyes fell on me Uncertainly, she sank back into her chair. "Tim!" His mother's voice was neh with delight, "Why the porch. "Rusty, you're tracking snow all over," she didn't you call and say you were on your way home?

Brimming over with the joy of Tim's arrival, she was oblivious of my presence. "Did you have any trouble getting up the driveway? We had at least eight inches of snow last night."

"It was all cleared. You know David," Tim jibed. He kissed his mother ebulliently, and kept her hand in his as he moved aside slightly to bring me into view. I caught the quick, startled intake of her breath. The

strained glint in her eyes. Still, the smile she shot in my direction was spontaneously welcoming. Good manners reacting automatically. "Mother, this is Michelle." Tim cleared his throat selfconsciously. The atmosphere in the room suddenly be-

came tense. Clairs Nelson's smile was forced now "How nice to have you here at Nelson Woods Michelle "

"Mother, Michelle is an early Christmas present for you." He was trying painfully to be casual. "Mother, your new daughter-in-law. My wife."

Tim's mother whitened beneath her tan. The girl in the chair flushed hot with color. Very quickly, however, his mother recovered

"Tim. what a marvelous surprise!" She moved forward impulsively to kiss me. But her hand at my arm was trembling. "But how dare you deprive us of a wedding at Nelson Woods?" She assumed, correctly, that ours had been a quick, business-like wedding. She smiled reassur-

ingly at me, swung back to face Tim again. "When did this all happen?" "We were married five days ago in New York, I met Michelle in Paris last summer," Tim was enormously re-

I could tell that Diane had been waiting for Tim, and expected to marry him. And the servants, Dora and David, adored her, and consequently, hated me!

lieved at his mother's reaction. "And not a word to me," she scolded, "But never mind, I've been telling Tim for two years he ought to get married." She turned toward the quite lovely girl in the chair, who sat there wearing a fixed, uneasy smile. "Diane darling, come here." She beckened the girl to join us.
"This is Diane Winston," Mrs. Nelson introduced her with affection, "Diane, this is Tim's bride-" She hesitated, annoved with herself because she didn't instantly recall my

"Michelle," I supplied. For a moment her eyes went opaque. The Frenchness of my name an irritant? No. don't think that way! Tim's mother was delightful. "Tim and Dinne grow up together," his mother ex-

plained. "They were inseparable as children. Diane lives at Wieston Acres, the next house." "Winston Acres is a quarter of a mile down the road." Laughter lighted Tim's eyes. "But up here that's right next door." Despite the blithe tone, he was uncomfortable in

Diane's presence. He would have preferred to introduce me to his mother without Diane present, "How've you been, Diane's "Fine." She smiled impersonally "Diane brought Dora tomatoes and cucumbers from her hothouse," Tim's mother said casually, "Dora abso-

lutely worships Diane, as she does Tim. To Dora they're still her two little ones," Involuntarily I glanced to the door. Dora and Rusty had disappeared from the corridor. Diane left. Tim, his mother and I settled ourselves before the magnificent floor-to-ceiling fieldstone-faced fireplace, with Rusty cautiously invading the room-tail wagging furiously-to stretch at Tim's feet. Tim had come home. I was the outsider.

Dorn came in, at last, with the coffee tray, bearing delicate, white bone china cuos and saucres, unexpectedly modern, as were the matching coffee pot, ereamer and

sugar bowl. Yet this contemporary note was not jarring in this oak-beamed, wrought iron chandeliered room. It was an eclectic blend that soothed the senses. Surreptitionsly I watched Tim, willing him to relax. He dearly loved his mother, yet I suspected the strength in

her kept bim on guard. Oh, how often there must have been a clash of wills between Tim and his mother! Two superbly strong people, with bis mother having the ad-

vantage of age and relationship. I sipped the fragant coffee with my mind traitorously focusing on Diane. Claire bad hoped for a match between Disne and Tim. Then Tim brought me bome as his new bride. Now I understood why he'd stalled on telling his mother be was married. He was shattering a dream.

"Tim, wby don't you show Michelle around the bouse?" his mother coaxed when we'd finished our coffee. "I'm sure she's eager to see her new bome."

"Mother, we'll be moving into the cottage," 'I'm said self-consciously. "I suppose it'll take a couple of days to clean up-"

"Move into the cottage?" Claire stared at Tim with disbelief, "Darling, that would be absurd. That tiny cottage, when we have this whole big house up here? I'm away all day at the plant-you'll bave the whole place to yourselves. Tim, this is your home."

She leaned forward with a rush of warmth to cover my hand with bers. "I wouldn't dream of letting Michelle spend the rest of the winter in that icebox of a house. It

isn't properly insulated. The roof leaks. And Dora and David would be terribly hurt if you two moved away from the bouse. They're both devoted to Tim," Claire said to me, "And now Tim's brought his wife home. Neither of you can do wrong in their eyes." But Dora had looked at

me with active dislike "Mother, we can manage quite well in the cottage," Tim insisted with quiet stubboroness. "In the late spring I figure we can break ground for a small bouse of our own.

I'm already working on the plans." "Tim, you can't expect Michelle to spend the winter in that dreadful cottage." She swang to me for support, "Michelle, make Tim understand, It's cold and drafty in

the cottage," Her smile was anxious as her eyes searched mine, "You do like the bouse bere, don't you" "It's mamificent," I said quickly. How could I say I wanted to take Tim by the hand and run? But this elegant house was tainted with the memory of Diane's anguisb

when she saw me with Tim. "But it's up to Tim-" I turoed to him with an uncertain smile. "All right, Mother," Tim acquiesced tightly. I badn't expected capitulation. "We'll stay,"

We were served luncheon in what Claire called the family dising room, a large, multi-windowed room in which the sunlight streamed, belying the sub-zero weather outdoors. The beavy, thoroughly English midday meal was served by one of the day help, a young French girl named Cecile. Perhaps Tim over-emphasized his mother's

distasts for the French, I decided. Tim was unusually taciture over dinner-angry, I assumed, because he'd been pushed into an acceptance of immother's decision than we remain here in the main boase. Had I let him down in leaving the decision to hiard house. Had I let him down in leaving the decision to hiard let have been been as the same than the let have been a let

denater that tagged at the Francisco group I not by some of many forms of the species of the spe

built as cheaply as we can manage in these inflated times."
The brightened. "You can build cheaply said still come
up with interesting results." We were an his favorite topic.
"Wow, what I learned at Specter and Lynch" His face
glowed as he learned forward. "I've been aiready working
on the housting development for the plant employees. The
new village we talked about has tourner."
"Well have to think a foat about that." Claire bedied.

"Money's tight now. This horrible wave of inflation. The need to meet competition if we want to export...." "Mother, ten years ago you talked about replacing those houses," Tim reminded her with intensity. "They're

serais. Sixty and investoy years det."

The control was been for year and the control of the con

a handred houses this yeard Two hundred next year. A new house for every plant family, Many of the workers, Tim had told me, were second- and third-generation employees. But the younger ones were more impatient than their parents and grandparents. Tim forces werlows this mother did nothing to improve triving conditional than the properties of the prope

I dreaded looking out our window, facing a terrible drop into

the cold, churning St. Lawrence River. All I wanted was to feel Tim's

arms around me, his lips on mine.

ot staying here in the house. So was I. I yearned for the nin privacy of the small cottage. But for now we must make

"My room's right down here." Tim pointed me tome? ward the second door along the corridor. Perhaps it.
I would be in front of the house. Away from the river. Oh,
the list it be.
Tim opened the door, gestured to me to enter.

Tim opened the door, gestured to me to enter.

"Tim, it's lovely." I gazed around with admiration. It
was not a man's room at all, except that the chest, the
dresser and the night table were massive.

The room wore the aura of a sunny Mediterranean vills. It was filled with dark woods, much wrought iron in lamp bases and occasional tables in the sitting area before the marble-faced fireplace. The dark woods were highlighted by the marigolid-yellow of the wallpaper, the draces and the sold of the carrectine.

drapes and the gold of the carpeting.

"Come over here and see the view," Tim urgod, gizzing out into the early dust.

I took a deep breath. I knew this morbid fear of water was childible. Yet so many times I awoke from a night-

was commun. Yet so many times I awone from a nightmare in which I was dying in the dark waters of a river. As my mother had died.

"Does it look down on the St. Lawrence?" I inquired unsteadily. my heart pounding.



"A great view of the river," Tim said with pleasure, and I felt faintly sick "It must be a fearful drop," Look down, Smile, Tim expects that.

"I told you, there's a stone railing for hundreds of feet along the property," he chided tenderly. "And look over there at the mountains." He dropped an arm around my shoulders, "Isn't that elorious?" "Oh, yes!" I was easer to move my gaze from the

menacing swirl of water below to the snow-capped mountains silhouetted against the darkening sky. How vast, bow austerely beautiful they were. "I love this room, 'Tim-" I ted my face to bis

"I love you," he said quietly, while," I said urgently, feeling the unhappiness in him

"Tim, it won't be bad to stay here in the bouse for a "I wanted to be alone with you," he admitted wryly "But I'm accepting a few months here in the big bouse. "Then what's wrong, Tim?"

"Call me Claire, as Diane does," Tim's mother urged. I'd learned that she was really his stepmother, but loved him-and Diane-as her own,

"Building ten houses," he said bluntly. "Mother's giving me a toy."

"Tim, that's an awfully expensive toy," I protested.

"She could arrange to finance fifty houses," he insisted

tightly, "She has the collateral,"

"How do you know she can, Tim?" "Because at one time I spent a month studying the profit structure at the plant," he said earnestly. "I can't make Mother face facts. She drends the day when I move

into management. I stared at him in shock, "Tim, do you plan to take over some day?" "I don't dig management," Tim said honestly. "B

someday-when Mother hits 87 or so-she'll decide she's had it with the plant, and it'll fall on my shoulders. "Tim, you'll enjoy it." I was astonished at this di covery. I'd thought architecture was his whole life. "You'll find it a tremendous challenge."

"I was only 11 when Dad died," Tim reminisced, while I dropped into the chair across from him. "But I remember him so well. The feeling between my father and the workers was beautiful-even though he was English. They respect Mother-but they don't like ber,"

out. "Wow, would women's lib have a field day up berel"
"Fare before Dad died. Mother was involved in the "Even before Dad died, Mother was involve business. She needed that kind of activity. Then, of course the whole thing fell on her shoulders. She was saddled with the plant and an 11-year-old stepson-" He paused, conscious of my sudden astonishment. "You didn't know she was my stenenother." The disclosure made him feel

awkward. "Tim, you never mentioned it," I tried to sound easual, "But what's the difference? You love ber as though she

were your own mother." "T've always felt it was disloyal to talk about. She's great-I don't even remember my own mother. Sometimes we clash." His smile was wry. "We're both strong-willed, stubborn." And compassionate, I mentally added. Clain was upset for Diane. "Dad used to say Mother and I were more alike than he and I. I ouess I always feel suitty when I battle with Mother because I know how great she

Tim rose to his feet, moved over to pull me to mine. "I'll go in and shower-get rid of some of my frustrations. But Mother hasn't heard the end about the developmen I'm determined to put up at least fifty houses within the next year."

I sat curied up in a club chair before the fire while Tim lineered under a hot shower. The bathroom door was slightly sjar so that he might enjoy, with me, the Racbmaninoff Concerto No. 2 in C Minor which I bad put on the stereo. Slowly I turned the pages of one of the tooled leather scrapbooks Tim's mother had sent up earlier. Tim as a toddler. Tim as a small boy. Tim through

the wears into his teens. Remarkably the same. Yet I barned the pages with an uncomfortable awareness of Diane's constant appearance. Diane with adoration in ber eyes for Tim. And I could envision, again, the pain in Diane's eyes when Tim introduced me

Diane had expected, some day, to marry Tim. She had sat out all the long absences at college and graduate school, the year in Paris, the months in New York, nurtur-

ing the belief that Tim would return to her. Claire had expected that. Even Dora, who adored Diane

Tim knew, He'd been uncomfortable at Diane's presence when we'd arrived. I'd misinterpreted his discomfort. I thought he'd wanted privacy to introduce me to his mother.

Had there been a commitment on Tim's part? Somehow, I doubted this. But was Tim sorry now about us? Now that he was home? Was he remembering all those years with Diane? Was she to be a silent intruder the

rest of our lives? "Michelle...."

Guiltily, I shut the scrapbook, set it on the coffee table. Yes. Tim?" I tried to sound natural. "Darling, will you lay out a fresh shirt for me? I'll be out in a few minutes." "Don't rush," I said, Tim unwinds in hot showers. I'd

discovered that at the Adirondack lodge I chose a shirt, lay it across the bed. I squinted suddealy as something caught my eye. One button was hanging by a thread.

Tim, I'm going downstairs for a needle and thread. There's a button loose on the shirt." "Take another." "I will not." I said. "It'll make me feel wifely sewing

"She's done a good job if they respect ber," I pointed on a button for you," The first button, I realized with a flurry of sentiment, "Til go downstairs to scrounge for a needle and thread." I could hear Tim's tender laughter in the bathroom as

I strode to the door. He was probably accustomed to handing over such tasks to Dora. But he had a wife now to sew on his buttons. To run up curtains and drapes when we moved into our own small house. To prepare his meals and bring up his children. I hurried out to the stairs, graring myself mentally to

ask Dora-who so plainly resented my presence at Nelson Woods-for needle and thread. What about David, I wondered as I approached the stairs. He was less overtly hostile than Dora, yet I suspected I found small favor in his eyes. But wby should I concern myself about the domestic staff. I asked myself defiantly?

Then suddenly, without warning, someone-something -burtled down the corridor behind me. It was thrusting me down the stairs! I was falling! Falling down that dangerous length-my mind flying apart with shock,

In a frenzy I tried to grasp hold of the bannister to that Roger knew, already, about my arrival. Probably, break my fall. And as I did so, my attacker was immediately all over me. Warm. Breathing hotly at my throat. Rustyl The doe trained to attack!

I seresmed my voice shrill with terror, "Tim! Tim!" As I tried to avoid that open mouth with its jagged rows of teeth, my head hit sharply against the bannister My shoulder simultaneously took an agonizing whack. I

who was Tim? Why was Rusty attacking me this way? Who had given him the command?

"Miebelle!" The anxiety in Tim's voice broke through the haze of darkness that imprisoned me, "Miebelle---" I struggled to return to consciousness. "I'm all right, Tim," I whispered painfully, forcing my eyes open. My shoulder was stiff from its collision with a

step, my head pounding from its encounter with the wall, "I'm just kind of groggy." Up above us Claire chastised Rusty, ber voice deep with outrage "Easy." Tim said with solicitude as I tried to get into a

emi-sitting position. "I can't figure out what got into Rastyl" He brushed my cheek with one hand in a gesture of tenderoess. "David! David!" Claire called impatiently, "What on

earth is taking him so long?" "Dora had to go outside to call him," Tim explained. "He went out for logs. Can you hang on to Rusty?"
"Of course I can." Claice said imperiously. "But I'm furious with him. Whatever happened to make him go

after Michelle like that?" "Can't Rusty be leashed until we're sure he understands I belong here?" I saked, I didn't want to deprive Tim of the dog he loved, though inwardly I shuddered at the prospect of another unwary encounter with Rusty. But on our arrival Rusty had greeted me with such exuberant affection. Someone must have given him the attack commend

"Michelle, how lovely you look," Claire stood in the doorway, nursing a pre-dinner cap of coffee. She, too, had changed for dinner. How elegant and attractive the looked in that gray pantsuit and nearly

the bad called to tell him. "Michelle, this is Roger Edwards." "Helio, Roper." I immediately liked the tall, slight,

fair-baired man with a pleasingly diffident air. He was perhaps three or four years older than Tim. There was a quiet strength about bim that was reassuring. He would keep the cool at the plant, if anyone could "I hope you enjoy living up here, Michelle." There was an eagerness about him that binted of loneliness. His social life, I thought sympathetically, could bardly be

extensive. "I'm sure I'll love living bere," I said efferyescently. Tim was here. That was all I needed.
"There's little unemployment in this village," Tim com-

mented. "You keep the plant running year-round. "But do they approxiate that?" Claire's eyes glowed with distaste, "We're having trouble at the plant. The workers want to tell me how to run my business." Involuntarily my eyes swung to Tim. One of the major

gripes among the workers, I knew, centered around the ancient company houses in which they lived. "It's a rapidly changing civilization, Claire," Roger put in cautiously, "Television brings the whole world into their homes," And I remembered the TV antennas which

sprouted from even the most modest of houses on our drive un from Ouchec City. Claire turoed to Tim.
"Do you know who is the leader of the rebellious fac-

tion? Your old friend, Paul Martel, He tried to tell me what I must do within my own plant." "Paul?" Tim's voice was doop with astonishment. But I saw respect in his eyes. "Since he bas married and become a father, he's a lion," Claire said bitingly. "He even talks of a strike as

the plant. If I closed down the plant, they would all go on unemployment. But perhaps that's what they want," Claire taid with contempt, "A hundred dollars a week for doing nothing." "I'll bave to drop by and see Paul's family." Tim's eyes

were warmly reminiscent. "I was away at school much of the time; but when I was home, Paul and I were inseparable, since we were just toddlers. It was Paul who taus me French," Tim ehuckled, "He had to if we were to communicate. Eventually I taught him English." "I'm going to have so much time on my hands." Care-

Suddenly, Rusty, the Irish Setter trained to attack, lunged at my throat, "Tim! Tim!" I screamed. Who had given him the command?

Claire sat down in the black leather lounge chair with a small sigh of satisfaction. Why had I been so fearful of meeting her? She was delightful "You're pleased with Roger Edwards, I gather," Tim said casually.
"Roger speaks French as a second language, They re-

spect him for that." A fact which clearly annoyed Claim. who had no taste for speaking French, "Still, Roger has problems from time to time. They can't forget completely that he's English." She smiled wordy "We're the enemy you know " A car pulled up out front. Claire rose to her feet.

We could hear Claire's warm greeting at the door, and their quiet conversation as they walked down the sorridor to the library. Discussing business. Next to Tim, the plant was the most important thing in Claire's life "You must meet Tim's bride." Claire said with a smile as she walked into the library with Roger, Yet I sensed

lessly, earnestly, I charged headlong into the conversation "Do you suppose I could start a nursery group for the pre-schoolers among the plant families?" Why did Claire stare at me with such shock? Tim and

I had discussed it in detail. He was enthus "I'm a nursery school teacher," I explained. Hadn't "I'm a nursery school teacher," I explained. Hadn't Tim mentioned this yet? "I love working with children..." My throat tightened at the look of rejection on ber face. "I wouldn't need much in the way of supplies, actually— and just a fair-sized room for a meeting place. Perhaps at the plant." My heart was pounding. Why did Claire seem to disapproving?
"Michelle," she said with constraint, "the plant families

are unfamiliar with such institutions as nursery schools They would look upon such a proposal with suspicion." "But research but proved the value of nursery schools,"
I pursued naively. "For the three and four year age
groups. I couldn't cope with more than ten, of course,

without help. But if a couple of mothers wanted to come in to work with us, the group could be enlarged. The way the cooperative nursery schools work in New York." "Michelle, this is not New York," Claire said firmly and I could hear Tim's voice. We're both strong-willed.

Stubborn. "My, you two look healthy." Claire welcomed us with a smile. "Have you been skating?" "We drove up to the lake." Tim reached to take the jacket I was peeling off. We'd left our skates in the car,

ptimistically planning another go at skating tomorrow. Michelle fell in love with it." "Tim, I've asked the head of the construction fire that's scheduled to put up the addition to he in my office

tomorrow around 10. I'd like you to be there,"

"Fine," Tim accepted with alacrity.
"And I've been thinking about your nursery group,
Michelle," she went on with an undertone of apology. "If you truly feel you want to go on with it, we'll give it a whirl. But don't be too disappointed if the mothers aren't cooperative. This is something quite foreign to them." "Roger has to drive to Ouebec City tomorrow on husiness-some piece of equipment was delivered that wasn't quite right. You can go in with him, huy whatever supplies

you require and charge them. Roger knows where I have accounts-be'll so in and introduce you. Do it up right, she ursed with a show of conviviality, "Progress is coming into the village." "You can huy a pair of those low tables and the chil-

faces the south, with lots of morning sun pouring in. The dren's chairs you'll need at the furniture store," Tim said. He was telling me not to pinch pennies. Claire could af-

plant's the best locale, don't you think, Tim?" She turned to him for confirmation. I was delighted when I learned that Claire's plant supervisor, Roger Edwards, was in love with Diane, and determined to bring them together.

ford this. No need to shop around for an old table to try to cut down, or to huild henches It's going to he fun. Thanks, Claire." I felt faintly self-conscious calling Tim's mother by her given namevet Diane did this, Involuntarily I frowned. Why did Diane keep infiltrating my thoughts?

I was delighted to speak French with the salescleck as signed to help me-mindful of Tim's warning that the French I heard here would be difficult from my mother's Paris-learned French, I felt a special warmth in the salesclerk for me as we chattered companionably about my nursery school plans. We were just winding up our transaction when Roger

arrived to cart me off to the art supplies shop in the Upper Town. For luncheon we went to a delightful restaurant on the Rue St. Louis, a few hundred feet from the entrance to the Chateau Frontenac.

"The cuisine is northern Italian at its best," Roger said with satisfaction. "The French pour in here-that shows you how fine the food is."

At Roger's urging, I ordered the duck a l'orange, though normally I would have had a calad or fish at this hour. But the duck arrived splendidly crisp and delicious, Roger glowed because I was vocally pleased. The waiter bear Did Diane know Roper was in love with her? Had he ever brought Diane here for Juncheon? Had he ever taken her anywhere? With the determination of the newly married, I promised myself to try to hring Roger and Diane

hroad grin of welcome. "Have a good day?"
"Fabulous." I hurried down the corridor to him. "The

store promised to have everything delivered day after tomorrow, Roger talked to them," I laughed. "I don't know what kind of gentle persuasion he used, but it worked, They'd told me a week or ten days for delivery." I felt a delicious surge of warmth because Tim was within fin touching. I'd missed him at odd moments during the day "Diane's here," Tim said casually. I tried not to show my disappointment. Pd looked forward to this small packet of time alone with Tim, before Claire arrived home

from the plant. "I've persuaded her to stay for dinner." "How lovely." I forced a smile as I moved into the library with Tim. Diane sat in a chair before the fireplace. "I'm over here almost as much as I'm at home, I some times think," Diane said softly, "But Claire's such a wonderful person. She makes me feel so welcome," Diane

smiled at me, but her eyes were secretive Does Dinne think there's a chance for her with Tim despite our marriage? She can't! To Tim she's the sister be never had. Can't she realize that? Why can't all of them

here at Nelson Woods realize that? Claire, Dora, David. I am Tim's wife. "Michelle-" Claire strede into the room. "I think I've found suitable space for your nursery group," She crossed the room to sit heside me. "There's a room at the plant that's not in use. It's not very large, but it opens up into another room, so you'll have a suite, actually. And it

"It's the only practical place," Tim's voice was slightly "Tim, are you coming down with a cold?" Claire inspected him with solicitu

"No," He hrushed this aside with amusemen "The workers' houses are situated just beyond the woods that surround the plent." Claire was back with me again. "Except on really had days—when nobody's going

outdoors-it won't be too much of a haul for the chil-"Great!" I was bright with enthusiasm, "I can start cleaning up right away, maybe do some painting." In my mind I was already visualizing the finished room, as Pd

been designing it mentally since I'd first discussed the plan with Tim.

By the following morning the roads were in better condition. I had breakfast with Tim, then went out to the garage to pick up the Volvo. I firmly vetoed Tim's going out with me. He still had traces of a slight cold. Claire had made a point at dinner last night of urging him to remain indoors another day.

I'd have to get a Ouchec driver's license, I noted mentally as I slid behind the wheel of the car, And realizing this gave me my first sense of helonging I drove slowly, enjoying the magnificent scenery. I had

to concentrate on the directions Tim had given me because I hadn't bothered to watch the route when I drove to the plant with Tim on Monday I reached the plant with no difficulty, parked and

tramped through the snow to the entrance, frowning slightly at the thunderous sounds of the equipment in op-

"Michelle?" Tim peered out the library door with a eration inside.



room. The girl at the deak spoke shaky English, was de lighted when I switched to French. She rose with friendly curiosity-realizing, I guessed, that I was Tim's wife-to take me to Claire's office "A visitor, Mrs. Edwards," she announced with defer-

spor in her heavily accented Facilish. Claire stanced up from the phone, nodded to the girl, waved me to a chair, Her office was large, austere. Her executive-size deck was worn with years of use. A utilitarian file eahinet sat in a corner behind her. A pair of armchairs flanked her deck. The sarging leather sofa that fanked a wall looked as though it were as old as Tim. The floor was covered with a black-and-white checkured

I sat down in one of the armchairs, my eyes immediately settling on the single photograph on Claire's desk. Eagerly I reached for it. A photo of Tim as a teen-ager I listened with respect to Claire's involved telephone conversation. This was her life: keeping the plant going,

making deadlines, coddling the business into solvency. Tim had told me how Claire had single-handedly put the hustness on its feet after his father died, at a time when every-Claire concluded her phone call and turned to me with

a brick emite "Would you like some coffee?" An empty cap sat at her elbow.

"Thanks, no," I was eager to see the rooms Claire was offering for my nursery group. "Then let me show you around the plant." Claire

with peide I followed her out of her private office and down the narrow side that led into the plant. The interior was rough-hewn, with no effort expended to make it esthet-

ically pleasing. Unfinished walls, worn linoleum flooring, hare windows were everywhere, We stopped several times so that Claire could explain the operation of a machine, I remembered what Tim had told me about her ability to repair the equipment berself

in an emergency. She was truly an amazing woman.
"Michelle," she said, suddenly apologetic, "I keep talk ing this way and you're anxious to see your rooms. then the was smiller at someone behind me. "Pierre, come here a moment, will you?" Again she directed her attention to me. 'I want you to meet Pierre, but first let me direct you. You go right down to the end of this siste, and entrance to your suite. Go in and look around. I'll be along in 5 minutes."

"I've worked oot the production hours," Pierre said with deference. "With the new equipment rolling we outht to cut about 8 hours from each run

"Pierre, this is my daughter-in-law," Claire introduced years ago," Claire chuckled, "Pierre, tell her your reaction to New York." Again, she was glancing behind me.

"Of course." Now I turned to Picere, who was obviously enger to talk about his 10 months in New York. "The city was fascinating," Pierre began, "And terrify-

"Michelle, please excuse my."

I listened sympathetically to his account of endless mishage, his final determination to ectum to his village. All the while I was impatient to see the rooms Claire had set aside for me. I was grateful when an employee called Pierre away to ask him a question.

I harried down the siele, made the right turn, counted doorknobs. The third door down, Claire had said. In the hack of my mind misgivings were already taking root about the scales level in the stant. Wouldn't this be awfully distracting for the children? Claire was accustomed to the noise after all these years. She wouldn't have thought about it.

I hesitated hefore the third door, frowning. No, Claire couldn't have meant this one. There was no knoh. The door refused to hudge. This room must be closed off. Claire must have meant the next door.

I mweel along the cervitor to the done beyond, turoed the than bettative. The door opened. I glassed indicate the table testive. The door opened. I glassed indicate the table testive than the testing the testing the testing the testing the testing testing the testing the testing the testing testing the testing testing the testing testing the testing the testing testing the testing the testing testing the testing testing the testing testing the te

would be fine. In my mind I was already setting up the tables, the chairs. The room was empty now, except for an My year were fastened on Roger as he odged around the perimeter of the room. He was featful of the extent of the weakness of the floor, but determined to treach me nonetheless. My hreathing was labored with the effort to main calm while Roger inched his way toward om, bugging the wall, where the floor would be stronger. "Viscor, throw me a length of rope." Roger sounded as

"Victor, throw me a length of rope." Roger sounded as many control fact as though the were asking for a glass of water. "You'll find it hanging on a hook right outside. He continued to move toward me. Oh, hurry. Hurry! "We'll get out of here, Michelle. Just Keep hanging on. You can do it." Could I, I thought with panie?
"What is if?" Claird's yole, fainly irritated, echoed

down the hall. "What's going on here?"

I heard the excited chatter as several of those gathered asxiously outside tried to explain to Claire. And then I saw Claire pushing toward the doorway, the others separating to allow her to approach. Even at this distance I could see her pale at the sight of me.

"Here comes the rope, Mr. Edwards—" The worker moved nervously into the room, fearful of the gaping hole in the middle.
"You don't have to come now closer. Victor." Pages

"You don't have to come any closer, Victor," Roger said, "Just toe the tops to me."

Oh, herry, I thought with anguish. How succh longer could I sang ord Bus it all could mean my death. With the rope in hand Roger dropped to his haunches. With the rope in hand Roger dropped to his haunches. With the rope in hand Roger dropped to his haunches with a round my waitin.

While I cleage to the leg of the desk, he tied a circle of contraction my waitin. While the his heads that he had not have the head had not have been a round to have head to have to hav

I was so pleased with the room at the plant Claire had offered me for my nursery. As I walked into it, the floor collapsed, and Roger rushed to save me!

cld-fashioned roll-top desk that sat against the far wall.

Imputsively, I walked toward the desk. Claire wouldn't
mind if we seed it. I could sand it down, refinish it. It
would be a heasty. But as I walked toward the desk, wish
terrifying suddenness I jiet the floor giving way heneath

me. What was happening

I screamed. Simultaneously my hands reached out fremselly for something onto which I could held to stop my fall. I cluttched at one sturdy leg of the desk, helding on for my life. But how long before the desk, too, would fall into that abyss helow? I was seconds away from death. "Help!" I tried to scream above the noise. "Somebody, please, help?"

I clung to the leg of the dock, hearing myself ery out for help, My heart pounding. My hreathing painful. The cement floor of the cellar was as least 14 feet below meast lined with heavy machinery. I would be badly injured—or killed—if I loss my gift, But how long before the desk, too, would topple into that gaping hole? "It came from here!" I heard Roger's voice out in the

hall, showe the excited French clamor of the workers. "Stand hack. The floor in that room is dangerous." Roper pulled the door open. My hands aching with the effort to hang on to the desk leg, I turned mately to him. My threat was raw from my agonized efforts to be breat show the din of the machinery. Rozer moved into the room, gesturing to the others for

silence.

"Hold on, Michelle," he urged gratiy. "Til pull you up.
Just hold on.—"

"Mon Dicu" A girl's voice rose perilously. "They will
both be killed!"

Victor, "Leave plenty of slack," he called out to Victor these droped to his fances. His name reached out to tector around my waist. His hands dug into skin with the Intensity of his elfors. "Put your arms around my nock," he contend. "It's all right. I won't let you fall." Knowing my life depending your Roort, I relieved the fact of the content of

only at him. Knowing I mustn't panie, mustu't throw him off halance.
"That's right," Roger encouraged gently. "Now I'm going to move hack to the wall and pull you along with me. Easy, Michelle. Nice and easy—

and nearly patientees. Note also easy many the starts already the starts already of the room as the others wanted white the starts already of the room as the others wanted white with him. Conscious that, as any moment, the floor hencath as might give way, 100.

Stowly we moved, until we were at the wall. Roger grasped at the window sill helhad him. Awkwardly he managed to bolts me to my feet, along with himself. We

began to make our way around the perimeter of the room. The rope was still around my waist, at Roger's insistence, as a precautionary measure in the event the floor gave way.

"Oh, Michelle" Claire's voice was unsteady as she wellcomed me lato the anxious claster in the corridor. "What

a terrible experience for you."

"I'm all right." I forced a smile, struggling to ignore the sick feeling that persisted in the pit of my stomach. "I'd

sick feeling that persisted in the pit of my stomach. "I'd never have made it except for Roger." Instinctively I turned to him. He stood at the door, minutely inspecting



"We suspected this floor was weak," Claire said angrily. "I told Roger to lock it!" "I know I did." Roger insisted, and I believed him, Somebody had opened it. Who?

"This door was supposed to be locked." Despite the evenness of his voice, his anger was obvious. "I locked it myself."

"We suspected the floor in this room was weak." Claire gazed inside with distaste. "That's why I sold Roger to be sure it was kept locked." "Claire, I don't know who unlocked it," he said with quiet determination, "but I'm going to make every effort to find out."

I sat beside Roger on the front seat of the Volvo and struggled to stay culm. Roger had locked that door, I felt sure. But somebody had unlocked it. Somebody who was confident that every worker in the plant had been alerted to the danger, but was aware that I-a stranger-would know pothing about it. I couldn't believe it was just a

"Roger, when was the knob removed from that other door?" I tried to sound casually curious. "It was there last night," Roger said bluntly, "Because I went into the room to make sure the windows were closed. Some of the workers sneak in there for a smoke

sometimes and leave a window open to clear it. Sometimes they forget to shut it." "Could the knob have fallen off by itself?"

"The possibility exists." But I could see he didn't believe that happened. Logical, tightly controlled Roger Edwards didn't believe it was an accident. "It must be one of those crazy series of small happenings that can add up to tracedy." Roger was trying to convince himself. knob on one door fell off. The other door, strangely, was unlocked. Roger sighed unbappily. "But I did lock it, Michelle I know I did."

At dinner Claire turned on her considerable charm to down Tim's mind from what had happened at the plant. Claire. I thought with admiration, would have been a huge success in the theater, with her attractiveness, her strong personality, her drive.

Tim, uncharacteristically tacitum, refused to be drawn into the casual table conversation. He was upset about me, I realized, and silently asking himself questions. And com-

ing up, I surmised, with no satisfactory answers. I'm going out for a while," Tim said abruptly as we left the dining room. "I won't be some long."

I was startled. Where could Tim be going at this hour of the night in a town like this? Just to drive around and think? No, my mind rejected. With a flash of intuition I knew he was going to see Paul Martel. To ask questions "Let's have more coffee in the library," Claire suggested. "We'll coax Dora into bringing us some of those petits

fours she served at dinner." But her eyes were somber. "I can never resist Dora's cake," I laughed. But at this moment I was not interested in food We settled ourselves before the fire. David brought us a tray. I managed a facade of attentiveness to Claire, but my mind kept chasing after Tim. Claire was in the midst

of a story about Tim as a small boy when the phone rang discordant in the stillness of the library. Claire crossed the room to pick up the receiver "Hello." The authority in her voice was a carry-over from her business day, "Wayne!" She sounded shocked.

Where are you?" I picked up a newspaper and glanced at it casually while Claire carried on a brief, guarded conversation. She appeared irritated by the call. Then she was saying an

nost brusque good-by and rejoined me before the fire. "That was Wayne Seaton." Claire's smile was sardonic, yet beneath her surface cool I sensed she was shaken by the call. "I didn't think he even remembered where I was. My ex-husband," she added in explanation, "I haven't spoken to him since I divorced him twenty years ago. Now he shows up in Montreal, as though it were yesterday. T just happened to be in the neighborhood, so I thought I'd call" she mimicked. "Over three hundred miles away. That's Wayne," She looked at me, "Do you know I'm Tim's stenmother?"

"Tim mentioned it one day. Entirely by accident. He was upset that he'd even brought it up," I added conscientiously. "As far as Tim is concerned, you're his real mother"

Claire went upstairs early. I waited for Tim to return. I was lonely, since it was my first night at Nelson Woods without him. When David came in to add fresh logs to the fire, he seemed taken aback to see me sitting alone in the library. Again, I felt a secretiveness in David. Not hostility

toward me, I felt, reassessing his attitude, Apprehension,

perhaps. Did he know what had happened at the plant? Does and he must have been at discussing it.
"Michelle, I'm sorry! left like that," Tim apologized.
"I went over to Paul's house." He dropped into the chair opposite me, his face serious.

"I figured you'd gone there."
"I don't think Mother understands how critical the sit-

uation is at the plant. Paul said frankly that the men are talking about a strike. Now, when it'll burt."

"Can't you talk to her, Tim?"
"If the thinks what she's doing is right, nobody can change ber mind," I'm said, "At any rate, I promised to sit im—amoficial—with a group of the workers that are meeting with Paul on Friday evening. They respect Roger, but they door! thank he welds enough power with Mother to convince her of the necessity of meeting their demands."

"Do you think you can, Tim?" My eyes searched his. I knew the battle of the wills between them. But Claire bad a habit of winning.
"I bave to give it my very best try," Tim said heavily.

"Because I believe a lot of what Paul says is valid. Mother's light years behind. Oh, we're invited to the Martels' for dinner tomorrow night. Paul and Janine are both dying to meet you."

"What are you going to tell your mother?" Chaire wouldn't be happy about our going there for dinner.

"I'm going to tell her Paul and his wife invited us," he jaid flath," Paul has breem yfriend for too many years to allow these hard feelings at the plant to inserfere, so Mother would like nothing better than to discharge the

an odd sense of loss when he left. Dorn, taciturn and disapproxing, brought use a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon that rivaled Tim's, then hurried to reply to a light knock at the kitchen door.
"I brought over lettuce, cacumbers and tomatoes."

Diame said with conspiratorial conviviality, not yet seeing me at the table. "I know bow Claire enjoys a salad these cold months."

cold months."
"Hi," I called out with a welcoming smile. I must make friends with Diane, I decided.
"Good morning, Michelle." Her smile was strained.

"Good morning, Michelle." Het smile was stranted.
"Come bave coffee with me," I coaxed, while Does
banged pots on the range with unnecessary clatter. I was
remembering how close Diane had been with Tim through
the years. Paul and Diane. "Tim drove over to Malbaix,"
Diane colored at the mention of Tim's name. "He's checking on prices for lumber or something or other." Way
couldn't J bring Diane and Roger together, I thought,

"Tan so excited about my plans to start a nurrery group," I rushed on ebullicatly. "I went into Qubbec City and shopped for a pair of those low tables and the small chairs I'll need, and a few bookeases. They've just arrived. Claire's having an outbuilding adjacent to the plant

put into usable condition."

I passed, disconcerted by the sudden look of reserve on Disne's face, "I'm a swaresy school seather," it explained to fill in the stark silence that fell between us. Why was Disne upset because I was starting a nursery group?

"I'm sure you're good at it." Diane forced herself into small talk, her eyes deliberately avoiding a meeting with mine. "Oh, Dora, you spoil me." She focused her attention mine. "Oh, Dora, you spoil me." She focused her attention.

Claire accused the French workers, led by Tim's best friend, Paul Martel, of causing trouble at the plant. "I can't believe they'd be violent," Tim said.

small clique of organizers at the plant—including Paulbut she's too bright to take a chance." He sighed. "I'm in a rotten spot, Michelle. My sympathies lie with the workers. My lovality belongs to Mocher."

Dora was just sliding a plate of scrambled eggs bacon before Tim, at the table in the dining area of the kitchen, when I approached. In the woods close by, I could hear the whire of a chain saw as David cut logs for the fireplace from trees brought down by a recent storm. Dora glanced up as I approached, a flicker of annoyance

in her eyes.

"Good morning," I said with manufactured brightness.

"My, that looks delicious."

"You want the same?" Dorn asked with grudging polite-

nets.

"I'd love it." I sat down at the table, leaning forward to dich a crunch of becon from Tim's plate.

Cecile came in to Dora for orders. Dora snapped at

her. Cocile shot me a philosophical amile and shruged. She wasa't perturbed by Dora's ill humor. "Would you like to drive over with me to Malbaie?" Tim asked, and I guessed he felt guilty at not making the

suggestion earlier.

"You're on business. I'm going to use the morning to block out concrete plans for the nursery group. Frederic is too young yet, but did I tell you Janine's working up a list of families with children in the

right age group?"
"Don't get yourself oversubscribed," be warned jokingly.
Tim ate quickly, refused a second cup of coffee. I felt on Dors, who was coming toward her with the promised plate of ecochies.

"Diane, would you like to help me with the nursery group?" I leaned forward engerly, pleased with this new thought. Diane had a softness, a gentle way about her that would be so effective with small children. "They're such fun at the preschool age."

I was startled by the look of bitter rejection on Disne's face. I haw her hand tremble as the reached for a cookle. "Thank you, Micbelle," the said with an effort at casualness, managing a tiny smile. "But I know I'u be dreadful in that kind of situation." She turned deliberately to Dors, cutting me oft. "Dors, I should have pars'ey by the end of next week. I'll bring you the very first bash."

"That'll he nice," Dora said gently. "Partley adds such a nice touch to potatons or a said." But her eyes, filled with venous, were on me. I couldn't understand what 1'd done. I know I can be overly impulsive, unthinkingly undiplomatic—but what had I done wrong in asking Diane to work with the nursery group?

I concentrated on finishing my breakfast white Diane and Dora discussed the progress of Diane's hothouse parden. For some reason I was being pointedly ignored. I was being punished. How absurd! Because I'd invited Diane to help with the unstrey group? Was there some

I was being punished. How absurd! Because I'd invited Diane to help with the nursery group? Was there some caste system that I was violating? Diane finished her coffee and cookies and left the house with polite good-bys to Dora and me, Dora, her face

fight, stood at the kitchen door, watching Diane walk to her car.

"Why are you trying to hurt Miss Diane this way?"

Dora swang around to me accusingly when we heard the car start. "How could you be so unthinking?"

"What are you talking about?" I stared at Does in incomprehension. "What did I do?"

"Asking her to come in to work with those children!"

Dora's face was tast with fusy. "Her that can never have a child of her own."
"I didn't know." I stammered. "Dora, I dido't know."
How could I have knows?

How could I have known? Dors struggled to remain calm, and I could see that she believed I had not brea shilherately cruci after all. "Excuse me, Mr. Nelson, for milling that way." Dorn apologised stillly. "I lorget swyself for a misute. But I know what it means to this gift, never to be able to have called of her own." There was a wistfulness in her own and the property of the still the still the still you believe when the children what is all the still you believe we her children when the could be to have you had been were her children when the could be you had been were her children when the could be you had been were her children when the could be you had been were her children when the could be you had been were her children when the could be your beautiful to the country of the your beautiful to when the property of the your beautiful to the property of your property of the your property of your property of

After lunch I went upstairs to our room. I sat down at Tim's deak to work on the layout of the playroom, but my mind refused to stay with this task. Traitoroutly, my thoughts keep darting back to that room at the plant which I'd believed had been assigned to me—where, lor an acontinue few minutes. I'd grazeled with death.

destroy a dream.

the plant." Her eyes were pained. "Michelle, if it was not an accident, then it was planned by someone other than a worker at the plant." Janine leaned toward me, "The men have sworn to Paul that the workers had no part of it. They would not lie to him. I know this."

"I don't believe it was an accident at all." From the glist which came quickly into Janine's eyes, I knew Paul and she, too, believed someone meant me harm. "But if it wasn't someone in the plant, then who was it, Janine's Who wasted me to go into that room and fall to my death?"

"I don't know." Janien' eyes were troubled. "But one of the men told Paul that David—from Nelson Woods—drove over to the plant while you were there. Perhaps he came to bring something to Mrn. Nelson. How can we know?" Janine gestured expressively. "But somehow, Timust ask aboat this. The truth must be found out, Michaelle—before something terrible happens to you, Don't fail to tell 'Than about David, Don't give David another chance

to kill you!"

I turned eagerly at the sound of Tim's hand on the
doorknob,

"Hi," My smile was almost real when he entered. "You
put in a full day."



Dora's eyes were hard, and I could see she was struggling to remain calm. "How can you speak to Miss Diane that way?" she demanded."She can never have her own child!"

Impazient with myself, I abandoned the effort to work. The afternoon loomed ahead, anewardia and empty, 13 drive over to visit with Jaziese, I decided on impulse. Even though we were there lor dinner only last night, lastinctively I knew Jamine would be pleased to see me again—even this soon. Janine was flatteringly interested in my theories about child-raising. It would be Jun to alt down with her to talk for a while.

in my theories about child-raising. It would be Iun to sit down with her to talk for a white. Frederic was saleep in his room. Janine and I settled down before the fireplace to drink the delicious, strong coffee she'd prepared in anticipation of my arrival. She gave me the list of plant families with children in the preschool range, checking the parents who would be most

likely to welcome what I would oder. Beneath Janike's air of camaradorie, I sensed something was disturbing her. What' I waited, knowing she would confide in me—if she wanted to—when she had built herself up to it. "Last night, Mikhelle..." She paused, frowed and I

stiffened to attention. "After you left, though it was late considering that the men are in the plant at 7:30 in the morning, Paul went calling at a couple of houses. He felt he must ask questions. About what happened with you in

k. "It was good for me. I listened to a bet of gripse," he listed does y, and then I as in with Roger for some birds. in go in the financial situation. From what Roger cays, the Mother has verything in good happ, despite here prasing in about profits. Of course," he acknowledged, "Mother doesn't show own Roger all the figures, Remember," he added, "as much as the's pleased with him, Roger has only been with the plant is few months."

"I drove over to visit with Janine." I tried to sound
season, but my voice refused to cooperate.
"Great." Tim didn't notice my nervousitets. His mind

"Great." Tim didn't notice my nervousness. His mind was still grappling with plant problems. And he was pleased that Janine and I had hit it off so well.

"Janine told me that, after we left—even though it was

so late—Paul went over to speak to a couple of men from the plant. The ones who've been calling for a strike. He wanted assurance from them that they—they wouldn't—hadn't resorted to violence."
"Paul ment did they have anything to do with what

happened to you at the plant." Tim's face was grim.
"They swore they didn't," I said earnestly. "And Paul to believes them." I hesitated. "One of them said he saw David at the plant—at the same time I was there."

Tim frowned, rejecting the implication, a glint of anger in his eyes. "I don't know what they mean by that. David couldn't

have had anything to do with it." He was remembering the David of his boybood. The David who had taught him to swim, to fish, to row, "We don't even know, truly, that someone meant to harm you." His eyes were somber now, reflective, "It could have simply been an accident, Michelle." Tim wanted to be-

lieve this But David was there at the plant. And David could have given that attack command to Rusty.

"Let's don't think about it any more tonight." I reached to touch Tim's face. He seemed so upset, Suddealy he nulled me close. I could feel his heart thumping. I knew his anxiety, despite his efforts to appear unapprehensive. "Tim, everything's going to be all right," I whispered. I was willing it to be because I couldn't bear

to see Tim unhappy. "Michelle, I have to go into Quebec City again tomorrow. I don't know why I didn't think to bring up enough

drafting supplies to see me through for a few weeks. I know Mother's agreed to only ten houses-but I'm blocking the whole hundred I talked about. She can afford it. Even Roger believes that, though he hedged." He beld me

very close, his face against mine "Why don't you drive down to the city with me? We'll have lunch at the Continental. Start off with the caviar on tonst," he planned with anticipation. "Have the cog ou

grand vin. Honey, they prepare it superbly. For dessert, Italian carsura. A frozen masterpiece."

the driveway

"Perhans we could nick up a copy in Ouebec City to-"You'll bave to ask for it hy the author's name. Wayne Seaton. I didn't bother asking about the title when he phoned." Her eyes were cynical. She would never forget those early years of poverty with her first husband, I

morrow," Tim suggested, "What's the title?"

thought compassionately. This was the whip that still kept her driving to financial success. "It's difficult to imagine Wayne a success in any field," Claire continued. 'He was always full of big talk, promotions he planned." She frowned, regretting she'd spoken

this much about bim, I suspected. "Why are you driving into Quebec City tomorrow? Shopping?" "Drafting supplies," Tim explained. "And some last-

minute Christmas shoooing. When Tim and I came downstairs to breakfast, contemplating an early start for Quebec City, we found Claire

at the table. Dora was scolding her into drinking hot milk and butter. It was Dora's never-fail remedy for a sore "Dorn, I have a slight case of laryugitis," Claire crosked

in irritation. "I've agreed not to go into the plant. Now let me be." I wouldn't go with Tim, I decided guiltily. I'll stay

here with Claire and cheer her up. Perhaps this was my chance to break through her reserve. Grow closer to her. I knew Tim was anxious for this.

I waited until Tim started upstairs for our coats to tell "Tim, I think I'll stay home after all," I said, a hand on

I'd stayed home to keep Tim's mother company when she was ill, much as I longed to go with him. I had come to welcome getting away from Nelson Woods . . .

"Oh, Tim, it sounds marvelous!" We would be away from Nelson Woods for a whole day. What a glorious reprieve. I thought. Tim pulled away slightly as he heard a car coming up

"There's Mother, We'd better go downstairs for dinner. I'm famished," be admitted with a grin. "This Canadian "In a minute," I said. "Let me run a brush through my

hair." I had a little-girl determination to look my best in Claire's presence hecause she was always so beautifully groomed, so attractive.

Claire was talking to David in the foyer as we started down the stairs. Automatically I stiffened. Tim's band reached for mine, and squoexed it gently. "Who on earth sent me flowers?" Claire was frowning

as she opened the florist box that sat on the foyer table. "All the way up bere!" "Suitors, Mother?" Tim called out tensingly as Claire lifted an armful of long-stemmed red roses from the box.

Frowning, Claire banded the roses to David, and reached for the card. "From my ex-husband," she said tightly while David recreated with the roses. "He sent me a Christmas card eight years ago-that was the last I beard of bim. Now he's rented a car and he's driving around Quebec for a

few days. I have a feeling he may show up here. He seems to be having some kind of success with a novel he wrote." "Wayne would only send the best," Claire said drily. "He has a flair for that sort of thing. Though I gather from his phone call," she said, respect echoing in her voice, "that he's having some success with the book."

his arm as we passed in the fover. "Td feel so guilty, having fun in Ouebec City while your mother is here alone and not feeling well. We'll go in one day next week." "Michelle, you're sure you won't mind staying?" His eyes searched mine. He seemed disappointed at our not having today alone, yet pleased that I was making this

overture of friendship toward his mother.
"I think I should," I said firmly. "You know," he said softly, his eyes making love to me, 'Tm slad I married you. Come on upstairs with me while I get my cost. Give me the pleasure of your company for

these few minutes." In our room Tim pulled me close. "Michelle, stay close to the house today." He was

axious for me. Fearful of another attempt on my life. Downstairs I sought out Claire to ask about a stamp. I found her, changed from robe to pantsuit, in absorbed concentration with Dora in the kitchen over the menu for

tomorrow night's dinner, Dr. Cartier, she remembered, was particularly fond of Dora's roast beef. David was in the kitchen, also. Piling logs high in the fireplace "Could I borrow a stamp?" I asked with a bright smile. "I think I can make this morning's pickup if I take this

right down to the box "Michelle, I thought you were going into Quebec City with Tim," Claire said, surprised to see me.

"I decided to stay home," I said casually. I was selfconscious about verbalizing my reason for remaining "Tim will just have to bear up alone for the day." "Oh, he didn't so in alone." Dora said with devious softness, her eyes triumphant as they met mine. "Didn't you know, Miss Claire?"
"Didn't I know what?" Claire was irritated with this

odd by-play.

"Miss Diane came over with some parsley," Dora began. "When you went up to your room to dress. Mr. Tim invited her to drive in with him so she could finish her Christmas shopping. Her car's sitting out in the garage." She nodded in that direction. A secret little smale framed her thin mouth.

"How nice for Tun," I stranged to conceal my surprise. I wan't among, I told myself. Poor Diane, So positully lorely. "It's a long drive all alone," "Dora, go to the dare, nyease, and being my stamp box from my desk," Calire ordered. I knew she was furious with Dora, despite her even tenes. Her eyes gave off sparks of rage, but she turned to me with a condilatory

from my desk," Catire ordered. I knew she was furious with Dora, despite her even tenes. Her eyes gave oft sparks of rage, but she turned to me with a conciliatory mile. "Michelle, why don't you take the snowmobile out for a white? It's right outside here. The sun is trying hard to break through Enjoy as hour or two outdoors. It'll be good for you. It's so easy in this cold to confine yourself indcorn."

indoors."
"I won't be gone that long," I laughed. "An hour at the
"lowot," And walle I was gone, I guessed, Claire would lisce
into Dora for maliciously telling me about Diane's going
into the city with Tim.
I dressed leisurely, anticipating my small excursion, I'd
be back in time to have lunch with Chair. I excused my-

self, feeling faintly guilty because I wasn't spending the morning with her.

I hurried down the stairs and back to the kitchendestried now—and out the rear door to where the bright

described now—and out the rear door to where the bright red snowmobile was parked. There was a beavy scent of snow in the air despite the sun. I slid behind the wheel with a sense of adventure, should of me. I moved slowly away from the house into the sweep of ocen, snow maked fields to the left. The snow was un-

marked except for the occasional tracks of small animals like delicate tracery on an old canvas. Soon, with a bravado I had not expected of myself, I stepped more firmly on the gas. Feeling a sense of exhilaration as the snowmobile sped over the snow, I onlowed the rush of share, cold wind on my face.

Tim had urged me to stay close to the house, but a short snowmobile ride wouldn't hurt, I thought—until I felt it wobble out of control, and turn over! When I became conscious I realized I might freeze before help came!

Quite suddenly, with a surge of slarm, I realized something was wrong. Why couldn't I keep to any oouses? Why was the snowmobile wobbling this way? My beart pounded as I heard a peculiar, wenching sound. What was happering?

I removed my foot from the gas, Did I dare use the

brake petal? No, it was dangerous to risk a sadden actical. The issommobile was moving over rough serrais, covered by snow. Why was it sipping? Suddenly! I realized the snowmbble was poing to turn over!

I head myself scream, knowing unconsciously that no-

snowments was going to turn over!

I head myself scream, knowing unconsciously that nobody could hear me in this whiterness between the two houses. My acream echoed through the silence as I felt myself burtling through space.

I hit something hard. I felt a dizzy avalanche of pain.

No, I mustn't fail into unconsciousness! Not alone in this vast empliness. I'll freeze to death!

But blackness was closing in around me like a shroud.



In a fog of hurt I heard, startlingly close, the anxious sounds of a dog barking. A warm wet tongue swent over my face, coaxing me back into consciousness.

"Rusty," I whispered in gratitude, my eyes fluttering wide. Rusty's instincts told him I must be brought back to consciousness before I froze to death in this sub-zero weather. "It's all right, I'll be up in a minute." Dizzy, fighting a wave of sickness, I pulled myself into a sitting position. I shivered as I saw the overturned snow-

mobile several feet away. How lucky for me that I had Together Rusty and I advanced along the narrow road, my eyes straining for the sight of a car. There was very

little traffic along this country route. I realized unhappily, We might have to walk all the way. But 5 minutes later we spied a jeep in the distance, sing in our direction. We halted in our tracks, waiting hopefully. The wind seeming increasingly sharp now. The

retreating sun emphasized the coldness of the day The jeep pulled to a stop. The driver, a ruddy-faced man in his forties, leaned forward with amiable curiosity "Boniour, Mademoiselle." I gathered that he found hitchhikers rare in this area.

"Bonjour, Monsieur." Rapidly, in French, I introduced myself, and asked for a lift to Nelson Woods. As I explained what had happened, his evelynous shot unward in estonishment and "Mademoiselle, you are all right?" be asked while he gestured for both Rusty and me to join him on the front

"Til be right back, Michelle. I want to talk to Dr. Cartier again before he takes off." I started at the light knock at my door. "Come in."

Cecile, manipulating a tray, came into the room "The coffee smells marvelous," I pulled myself into a sitting position with an unexpected eagerness. I suddenly remembered that I had skipped lunch. "I gather Dr. Cartier is still here?" I looked at her with curiosity, not honestly expecting that Cecile knew why Dr. Cartier was still at Nelson Wood Cocile was suddenly somber. Her eyes doubtful. Fear-

"Mademoiselle, I am not sure I am to tell you this. I heard it quite by accident-" I sat up straight, narrowly avoiding overturning my

dinner tray. My voice was uneven when I spoke, my throat "Cocile, please tell me--" "David towed the snowmobile back to the house,"

Cecilo said slowly, "A little while ago Monsieur Tim and Dr. Cartier went out to have a look at it." She took a deep breath. "They believe the treads on the snowmobile were deliberately slashed. That someone meant for you to die."
Tim seemed exhausted as he sat down at the edge of the "We'll need professional help, Michelle," Tim said quietly. "At this point we know nothing. No motive.

Nothing-" He postured helplessly.

"I don't know whether I should tell you this." Cecile confided, "but they believe the snowmobile treads were slashed-somebody wanted you to die!"

seat. "Mon Dieu, what a thing to happen!" I expected to be dropped off at the entrance to Nelson Woods. But my driver insisted on taking me right up to the front door of the house. He watched solicitously while I climbed down from the icep, Rusty right at my beels. "Dora" Claire's voice called from the library. "Who

just drove up "Miss Michelle," Dora said loudly. I was progressing, I thought with a touch of humor. From "Mrs. Nelson" to "Mus Michelle."

"I had some trouble with the snowmobile," I began self-consciously, walking toward Claire, who stood at the library door, "I'm afraid it's smashed up "Michelle, what hannened?" Her voice deepened with

shock, "Are you all right?" As briefly as possible, I explained, aware of her increasing agitation as she realized what might have hapnenad to me "Go right unstairs and set into hed." Claire ordered

with a strained calm, "I'm calling Dr. Cartier." Dr. Cartier gave me a clean bill of health. Bruises but no bruken bones. If I felt any pain that indicated anything other than bruises, he'd take x-rays Dr. Cartier left me to go downstairs. In a few moments I could hear him talking in low tones with Tim at the head of the stairs. Then Tim was charging into our room, his

"Michelle..." "I'm all right, darling," I said quickly, happy and relieved that he was home Tim turned speculatively toward the door, rose to his

"I'll go into Ourbec City on Monday, Talk to a private investigating firm." He squinted in thought. "Let's not say anything about this to Mother until we absolutely have to." He sighed. For a moment I wanted to grab him by the hand and run. "She'll be terribly upset." "Tim, this is going to be expensive," I hazarded. "Can we afford in?" Tim sat down beside me again, reached for me,

"You've been watching too many TV mysteries," he chided. "Of course we can afford it, when it's your life that's at stake,"

Tim opened the door just as the car drew to a stop before the house. In a moment a tall, lean man stepped "This is Nelson Woods, isn't it?" His voice was mellow and warm, his face both sensitive and intriguing. He was, I imagined, somewhere in his fifties. The voice said he was of English-Canadian high "Yes, it is," Tim said guardedly, very much attuned to

danger these days. "My name is Seaton. Wayne Seaton." He was calculatincly ineratiation I suspected; but I didn't find this annoving "Is Mrs. Nelson at home?"

"No, she's at the plant. I'm Tim Nelson. Please come

"I'm-I'm an old friend of your mother," Seaton said cautiously, not knowing if Tim was aware of the relation-"You were married to Mother before she married m father," Tim said gently, "You're the writer with a book

face etched with anxiety.



on the best-seller list."

He Isughed. "I didn't think Chaire would mention it."
"Come into the library and have a drink to warm up,"
"I'm urged, showing him down the corridor. He liked
Wayne Senton on sight. So did I. "Oh, this is Michelle.
My wife."

"Hello, Michelle," There was an air of disarming friendliness in his eyes.

"Tim bought your book when he was down in Quebec City," I said. "He liked it very much," I added carnostly, and both of them chuckled. "Claire has it now. When she finishes it. I'll have a change to read it."

finishes it, I'll have a chance to read it."

"So Claire's still active in the business?" Wayne said, settling himself into a chair by the fireplace. "I've heard about her through mutual acquaintances through the

years. Successful, I gather."
"She's amarine." Tim said anthusiastically.

"She was always quite a woman." Wayne's eyes were somber, looking inward. After all these years, I could

see be was still in love with Claire "But stubborn!" He whistled eloquently, a glint in his eves, "When Claire made up ber mind to do something,

nobody bad better get in her way." "Like Tim," I commented lightly. "They're two of a kind." But it often disturbed me that Tim and his mother could generate such covert hostility between them, neither

willing to make concession "I suppose I should have phoned before coming out," Wayne apologized. "I'm staying at a motel about 25 miles down the road. It seemed about not to see Claire when I was so close. I was driving around, and the next thing I knew I was heading this way

"Mother bas more than the plant to be tense about," Tim said grimly, and I shot a swift, startled glance in bis direction. "What do you mean?" Wayne leaned forward, instantly

As matter-of-factly as he could, Tim told him about the series of near-catastrophes. "I can't accept them as accidents," Tim admitted. "You

have a mystery-oriented mind, Wayne. I thought you might have some ideas about all this." Td get Michelle out of here and turn that investigator loose pronto," Wayne said bluntly. "Pack up tonight and go to a motel."

"Wayne, how dramatic!" I laughed shakily, "Actually, most of what's harmened has occurred outside the house.

I took the luscious, red tomato Diane had brought from her hothouse, to eat with my lunch, "Wait!" Tim velled-and pulled the tomato out of my hand!

"You'll stay for dinner, of course," Tim assumed. "Why don't we call Mother and tell her you're here? Maybe she'll be able to leave the plant early." Tim was diplomatically forewarning Claire of her former husband's presence. But somehow I doubted that this would disturb her. At Claire's ureing, it was suggested that Wayne remain at Nelson Woods for a lone weekend. Agreeing readily, he drove back to his motel to pick up his luggage.
"First you'll have a drink," Tim insisted jovially. "To

warm you for the trip." I could see Tim was pleased that Claire arrived early from the plant, before Wayne returned with his lurespe. She was curious, I sensed about Wayne's book. She'd been so sure he'd never he a suc-

cessful author. Claire, like most successful people, bad great respect for success. In any field. Dinner was a grand feast from the outset. Obviously Claire had consulted with Dora about dinner, because this was a gourmet's delight. Wayne was absolutely lyrical

about the food. "Are you working on a new novel?" Tim asked. "I'm plotting another mystery," Wayne disclosed, "But before I go any further, I've got a problem to solve.

There's a poison involved in the plot. It must be something offbeat, difficult to trace." "We have a neighbor who's a toxicologist," Tim said promptly. "He also runs a local mill, but his heart is in toxicology. He writes regularly for the technical maga-

zines. Why don't we get you together with him? He might be helpful." "Til have Hugh and Diane over for dinner Saturday night," Claire offered "It isn't the gore that fascinates me." Wayne was un expectedly serious. "It's the turn of the criminal mind. We never know, actually, what soarks criminal activity. I be-

lieve that any of us-under certain circumstances-is quite capable of murder." "Wayne, that's your fiction writer's mind carrying you away," Claire scoffed. "The percentage of people capable

of murder is infinitesimal." When Claire said good night and left, Tim, ignoring her admonition, sought out Dora and asked her to take a cup

of hot milk to his mother. "She looks marvelous," Wayne said quietly when Tim ined us. "But she's terribly tense." "All the trouble at the plant," I said. "It's all rather new up here, remember."

"How many times do you expect to be lucky, Michelle" A vein was distended in Wayne's forehead. I was touched by the intensity of his concern for me. "Tim wants to be a husband, not a widower!"

"I'll be with Tim until Clark Grange arrives," I insisted, but I knew Wayne was right in urging me to leave Nelson Woods, "He'll he here Friday morning, Tomorrow we're going skiing right after breakfast. We'll be away from Nelson Woods all day."

Tim and I left the house and got into the Volvo with a spurious sense of adventure. Tim hadn't been to Blue Mountain since his senior year at school in Montreal While we drove along the sunlit road, he told me several amusing anecdotes about the mountain. But despite my effort to match his air of conviviality, I was haunted by the knowledge that Clark Grange's arrival was going to be delayed for 24 bours. A terrifyingly long time for

someone sitting on the edge of a cliff. For a while we were content with our own ski runs. I was improving. I thought with fresh confidence. It must be from listening to the pointers Tim casually made from time to time. But the cold was getting through to me.
"You're chilly," Tim noticed. "We'll go to the warming

but and bave coffee. Dora didn't stint-sbe gave us a quart thermos We brought out the sandwiches, packed thickly, with slices of delicious London broil. Two enormous wedges

of still hot mince pie. A tomato packed in aluminum foil, with salt thoughtfully provided. One tomato, because Dora, of course, knew of Tim's allergy. "Another of Diane's bothouse wonders," I said with relish, unwrapping the richly red, organically grown to-

mato. Lifting it to my mouth, I planned to eat it applefastion. "Wait!" Tim's voice lashed out at me while be seized my wrist in a vise-like grip. I watched bim in amazement

as be roughly pulled the tomato out of my hand.
"Tim, what is it?" "I'm not sure." He was struggling to remain calm. "But we're not taking any chances." He lifted the tomato to

his nose, smelling it suspiciously. Then be just kept staring at it. "Tim, what's wrong with the tomato?" "Nothing, possibly, but we're not cambling," He turned

the tomato around slowly in his hand, "You see those needle pricks? Or what look like needle pricks," be said. "Michelle, poison could have been injected into this tomato."
"How do we find out?" I was trembling—and not from
the cold.
"We're dumping this food," he said bluntly. "We'll drive
out to Le Bon Amerii for lunch. And while we're waiting

over to Le Bon Appetit for lunch. And while we're waiting for the food to arrive, I'm phoning Grange's office in Quebec City. They'll know a lab who ii be able to analyse this tomato for us."

"What are you trying to tell me, Tim?" Wayne's voice was slightly impatient.
"Sit down, Wayne. We won't tell Claire just yet, but we'd like your reaction to this. As a professional in the field," he added, with an attempt at humor, as he reached for a bottle in the liquor cabinet. "But wast one moment,

will you?" His voice was guarded; his eyes watched the door.
"We opened the hag to take out our lanch," he resumed in a low voice when Chells disappeared down the corridor. "Michell was just about to bite into a tomato. I stopped her. There were odd needle pricks at one point." That could be an imperfaction, "Wayne posited out

geardedly. But the atmosphere in the room was supercharged.
"I could swear there was an odor of bitter almostds." Tim's eyes met Wayne's.
"Cyanids," Wayne said quietly. "The instant killer."

Tim nodded. "That was my reaction."

"Where do you get tomatoes this time of year?"

"A friend—Diane Winston—grows them in her hothous. She brought two over to Dora this morning."

"Where's the other?" Wayne asked.
"Wayne, could Claire have eaten that tomato?"

I saw alarm surge through him, saw him fighting to remain cases. For all his casualness, he'd never completely fallen out of love with Claire, I felt. "If Claire had eaten that tornato, she could never have

made it upstairs to her room. I saw a light up there as I drove in."
"Wayne, she was going to have lunch from a tray, in bed." My throat was tight with four.

"Lunchtime the sunlight was pouring into the bouse,"
Wayne reasoned. "Claire turned the lights on at dusk."
He managed a smile. "The writer's mind at work again.
Now tell me: who is Diane Winston? Isn't she the neigh-

while he split logs for the fireplaces. She hadn't expected any of us down this early. Claire was probably sleeping late.

"Let me prepare breakfast," Wayne suggested with a festive sir. 'One of my small relents. I often did to socising when Claire and I were married. She loashed it," he remembered humorously, pulling open the refrigarated inspecsing its contents. "What about eggs Benedier?" "Great." 'I'm said, but I shuddered.

"Great," Tim said, hut I shuddered.
"Just tea and toass for me—despite your culinary genius." I laughed because Wayne was making a comic show of disappointment.

Soddenly person mag. Instantly the three of us west sees. The proof the room to pick up the receiver. "Helia-" He eleared his three learnenty, his yes tooking mine. Volk, Roger, poot morning. "He frowned as he instead to what Roger had to say. "Yes, I suppose I could come over." His eyes were apprehensive as they lingered on me. "No. I won't say anything to Mother." He he over in about as hour." He huns up, starting ouized-

cally into space.

"Roger was approached by the strike committee. Despite Mother's illness," he said rorfully. "He's auxious to discuss this with me before be takes the whole thing to Mother."

"Claire's not going to like that." Wayne's eyes were speculative. "Do you plan on going into the plant with Claire?" He know about Tim's architectural plans, about

his eagerness to build houses for the workers.

"Eventually I'll go into the plant," Tim hedged. But he
was increasingly concerned about the impasse between
Claire and the employees, a situation his father would
not have permitted to develop. "Michelle, I promised to

be over there in an hour."
"Go without me, It'd be ridiculous for me to tag along.
I'll be all right here, with Wayne in the house. Have your
breakfast and go right over." I urged him.

While Tim turned this over in his mind, the phone rang again. He crossed the room in wide strides, picked up the receiver again.

"Hello: From the set of his jaw as he listened to the

voice at the other end of the line, I knew this must be Grange's office. "Yes, we figured it was something like that." There was a downbear quality in his voice. "Inank you for calling so promptly. We'll expect Mr. Grange in the morning."

While Wayne helped us to sift through the evidence, the call from the lab came through. The tomato had been injected with cyanide—enough to kill me!

bor whose father is the toxicologist?"
"Yes." I found it difficult to accept that Wayne might suspect Diane.
"It isn't impossible to believe that he might have cyande in his laboratory." Wayne spoke offinededly, but

his words jarred me.
"Diane uses cyanide," I said after an anguished besitation. "To fid her hothouse of insects."
"What's the relationship between you two?"

tion. "To rid her hothouse of insects."

"What's the relationship between you two?"

"I think Diane expected to marry Tim some day," I admitted. "My arrival must have been a dreadful shock."

"On the other hand," Wayne speculated, "how could she he use Tim wouldn't set the somator."

"She could be sure." My voice was uneven. "Tim's allergic to tomatoes, as everyone knows."

The kinchen was desorted. Through a rear window we saw Dora, out in the hack, talking absorbedly to David

Tim put the phone down. His eyes were unhappy. "The analysis came through. There was sufficient cyanide in the tomato to kill whoever are it."

tomiso to kill wheever are it."

I sat in our room, struggling to concentrate on a magazine. I was grateful for the steady click of Wayne's typewriter next door, All I would have to do was to tap lightly on the wall, and he'd come in, Still, I started when the

door to the bedroom opened and Cecile walked in, vacuum cleaner in band.
"Oh, pardoner mot, Mademoistile." Her eyes widened in apology.
"That's all right, Cecile, Come on in," I smothered a

in apology.

"That's all right, Cecile. Come on in." I smothered a yawn. "Just vacuum around me if you don't mind."

"But I do not wish to disturb you." How serious above.

"It won't disturb me," I said firmly. "I was trying to read, but it just makes me drowsy." Suddenly Cecile's even were stowing. She smiled shyly. "I have three older sisters. Before every baby they are sleeny the first few weeks. The oldest, Maria"-she shook ber head with broad humor-"she would almost fall askep right at the dinner table." I gazed at Cecile in astonishment. Could I be pregnant? Oh, I wished this were true! Tim would he so delighted.

Who is it?" I could hear Dr. Cartier's voice somewhere in the background. "Tell Dr. Cartier it's Michelle Nelson," I said quickly,

My heart was pounding while I waited for her to convey this message. In seconds his nurse was back on the phone with me.

"Dr. Cartier will see you any time you can come in, until 2. That's when he leaves for house calls." The nurse sounded faintly disapproving of this favoritism "I'll be right over," I said. What was that click? Somebody on an extension?

In 20 minutes I was sitting across the desk from Dr. Cartier, breathless with anticipation "I cannot say for sure for another two weeks. It is then that I can diagnose with certainty." But his eyes twinkled. "However, I would guess that you are oregnant, Michelle, My girls usually know." He leaned forward with a warmth that reached beyond a routine doctor-patient relationship

"I brought Tim into the world. Now I will deliver his Caught up in euphoria I returned to Nelson Woods and went upstairs immediately to the privacy of our room. I found myself waiting impatiently for Tim to return from the plant. With early-pregnancy tiredness I stretched out on the bed, welcoming its comfort. Even while I told myfeet. I could hear Wayne typing in the next room. How could I reach through to him? Talk to Claire. Keep talking. Outdoors I could hear a car pulling into the garage Claire hadn't noticed. Perhaps it was Tim. Tim, burryl Hurryl "What have I done that's wrong?" "You're French," Claire said with contempt. "You're on the side of the workers. You'll eause trouble. Nobody's going to take away the plant control from me. Not after

all the years I've fought to make it successful. I won't let "Can Tim take over?" Slowly I was being inched backwards. Back toward the open window that looked out over the St. Lawrence, "You're in charge, Claire, Tim's no threat to you." 'I'm the executor of the estate, but everything belongs

Tim take over."

to Tim. Ever since he was 21. I can manage that old fool, Emerson-but with you behind him, Tim will start to ask questions. That's why you have to die." "Claire, I won't say anything to Tim," I promised

desperately. I was fearfully conscious of the open window behind me. The hitter cold lashed at my back. Aware of the perilous drop into the icy St. Lawrence that Claire planned for me, I was filled with sheer terror "We'll go away, Claire. Back to New York."

"You're pregnant, Michelle. Dr. Cartier will confirm this." There was an odd, hypnotic quality in Claire's voice She kent forcing me backwards. How much longer could

I stall? "They'll think you went to the window to enjoy the view. You had a dizzy spell. You fell. Tim will not have a child. His wife will have died in a tragic accident. For a

Drowsy and happy at the thought of being pregnant, I fell asleep. I woke with a sense of being cold. The window was open. Claire stood there, saying "Get up!"

self I wouldn't fall asleep, my eyes were closing. I awoke with a disturbing sense of discomfort, of being enid. Suddenly I realized I was not alone in the room. Someone stood beside my bed. Then relief suffused me, because I saw that it was Claire. She was wearing the magenta hostess gown she'd worn last night. One hand rested on the beadboard, the other in the slash pocket of

her gown. "You're tired, Michelle," she said quietly.

"Exhausted." I pulled myself up into a sitting position, fighting an impulse to confide in Claire. "Michelle, why did you go to see Dr. Cartier? Are you egaant?"
"Yes," I said tremulously, the secret flushed from me

But in a cavern of my mind I wondered how Claire knew I'd heen to see Dr. Cartier. "When I picked up the extension and heard you talking with his office, I suspected that." Claire's voice was unfamiliarly tight. And then, shivering in the chill of the

room. I was staring with disbelief at the hand that had emerged from Claire's pocket-holding a gun, pointed at "Claire, what are you doing with that?" I stammered "Get up from the bed," she ordered. "On your feet.

Impatience made her voke ugly.
"Claire, what's wrong?" What kind of nightmare was this? "You are wrone!" she spat out, "Why did Tim marry little while he'll grieve. Then he'll marry Diane. I will re-main in control." Her voice deepened with triumph. "All these years I've kept the plant running. I improved the business, brought up the level of profits. It should all belong to me as long as I'm alive. Diane will understand "Claire, don't do this," I whispered. And then I knew I must-somehow-stall another few seconds because the door behind Claire was stealthily opening. "Tim will

know I didn't fall out the window. I never go near that window, Claire. I'm terrified of the river. That's bow my mother died. By drowning." "Get away from the window!" Wayne's voice crackled through the room. "Claire, drop that gun."

Claire spun around, crying out in rage. "Get away from here, Wayne! Don't speil it! Not now!" All at once Wayne and Claire were struggling for possession of the gun. Claire, wild-eyed, showed unexpected strength. They were too close to the window. Oh, no! No! I screamed as Claire fell backward, burtling through the

window she'd opened for me.
"Oh, Wayne, Wayne—" I swayed with shock. "Michelle!" I beard Tim's voice in the corridor just outside, "Micbelle-" He burst into the room.

"Take care of Michelle, Tim," Wayne said. His face was ashen, eyes grief-stricken for his ex-wife. "I'll go down to your mother."

I later learned that Cecile, seeing me go np to my room but not knowing I was asleep, had-on impulse-brought me tea. At my door she had paused and had beard Claire threatening me inside. Terrified, she'd gone swiftly to

you? Why didn't he marry Diane as I'd planned? I could manage Tim and Diane." "I don't understand, Claire." Trembling, I rose to my



is Claire entered the room, intent on my death. Coming

Tim is taking over the plant. He'll build those houses. He's determined, with Roger's help, to improve conditions for the workers, to restore the kind of relationship his father had with the men.

Often these days Roger and Diane come to dinner at Nelson Woods. The growing closeness between them is a you to me. Even Hugh Winston approves.

Dora and David grieve for Claire, but both await impatiently the arrival of the new heir to Neison Woods.

Though not as impatiently as Tim and I.



On the Caribbean aland of Sunt Teress is the plumition owned by my uncle, Isaish Duriky, who is the only family I have, since my mother and father were lost in a dereckful regordy are see when I was four. I suppose almost my earlies memories center around Uncle Isaish, who was rult tenned, and powerfully sold irran, his showledders broat from yourfiel sliphound real. However, the deep broat from yourfiel sliphound real. However, the would see him one in purfuse y save or trow, when, as he said, he sailed from Sunt Teress to "overnee my wedfare."

Trecall I was nearly six years old, living with Miss Labert, a thin, slight woman, kindhearred enough, but always complaining of illness. She was often given to taking draughts directly from a bottle of cough medicine, which my child's mind found perfectly logical since it

invariably made her cough.

One aftension is harde cock ratted to a top just certification in the cock ratted to a top just certification in the cock ratted to a top just certification in the cock ratted to the cock ratted to the cock with the cock with his parts height, become protect, explored lengther. In one motion he hade a heavy canvas by from his back, veeper me to his shooker, I clarked his masses and the cock ratted for the cock ratt

suppose to impress my uncle. A rack of humb appeared for the first time in months. At the head of the table Uncle Isain presided, carried with precise gusto, isalded gobs of brown gravy over ross; postoos, whale our mouths watered as we passed heaped platters along.

A knock sounded at the front door. That busybody,

Prudence Towitter, jumped op. "I'll go," she said, then remembered her lessons. "May I be excussed?"

Miss Carsairs looked helplessly at my uncle, then nodded, and Prudence was off like a shot.

She returned shortly, her face puzzled. "It's a man for you, Captain Danley."

My uncle paused, the carving knife in mid-sir. "Describe him mis."

"It's a Negro," Prudence said, "dressed like a gentleman. He's got these big earnings."
Uncle Isiaih blanched, his eye twitched, then he gained control of himself. He came over and kissed my

Tomesthing urgent, little princess. Something I forgot.
"Something urgent, little princess. Something I forgot.
I'll write you from the plantation."
He kissed use gage little Cartesian, Cartesian, then left.
He kissed use gage little cartesian in footsful sounded fairne and fainter down the hall. Then there came the ununitariable thump of the back door. I set straight up puzzled, Why hadn't be gone by the front way to meet his callet?

That was two years ago, and Uncle Isaish never sent his promised letter.

tall-spread Park Street Charch.

When I was about six, Uncle Isaiah brought me a strange gift—an amulet engraved with a hideous snake's head, with wide-open mouth and venomous fangs!

When we got back home Uncle Isaish made a great show of runmaping through his carwas bag. He stood up with a narrow black case in his hand. He opened it with a flourish. On a pauf of black velver rened a curious owal amulet or medallion fearfully engraved with the head of a strpent, its wide-open mouth showing long, awecome fungs.

"To protect my little princess from stake bite," Uncle

"To protect my little princess from saske bite." Uncle Isaich said, hanging the armslet around my neck by a delicate silver chain. I looked up at him in wide-eyed little girl wonder. "Even in Boston?" I said.

"Wherever they are they won't harm you now," he said.

I remember clearly Uncle Isaish's last visit. I was sixteen, and in the four years I'd been at Miss Carstain's I'd

necied changes for the worse: mest was tought and served less frequently, vegetable tended to be stale. While we still had mmy more girls than we do now. I would often see Mus Carasaria during studies, starting off into spore, her themsh presend against her texth. Less Miss To perform the starting of the starting studies, starting against it, listening, She saw me, straightened, hidd her finger to her lips, She whippered, "Miss Carasaria keeps asking for

more money, and he keeps saying, "No!" Come listen, Selena."

That evening Miss Carstairs outdid herself at supper, I

Miss Carsaurs was standing by her deak as I entered the sparsely familiated room. At all and large-board woman, her face radiated a tranquility belying our achoolight who was a standard and the sparsely familiated and the sparsely substantiated and the sparsely standard sparsely standard sparsely standard sparsely standard sparsely standard sparsely sparse

folding her large-knuckled hands in front of her.

"You are probably wondering, dear child, what
prompted me to sak you here, e'er vrait!"

"Mais oul, medame," I said dutifully, trying to hide my
growing curnosity.

Miss Correction trained her forefiners on an envelope.

growing curiosity.

Miss Carstains tapped her forefinger on an envelope.

"The explanation is here," the said, handing me the cavelope. "My poor dear little Selena." It bore a Sants Teress postmark, was addressed in care of Miss Carstains in a fine trunfamiliar. Spencerian hand, and was dated two

weeks ago.

"Esteemed Mile, Selena Danley," I read, "doubtless up or remain in blessed unawareness of the circumstances touching the Plantation Danley, and the personal tragedy regarding your most worthy uncle. Not to put too fine a point on it, my employer, your

Not to put too fine a point on it, my employer, your uncle Isaish Danley, died three days ago of injuries sustained while recruiting laborers in the back country.

"Our sense of loss at the plantation is acute, but of course, it in no measure the equal of your personal bereavement. My heart goes out to you, dear Mile,

"But we live in a world which, while it tolerates sentiment, rewards only practiculity. As your uncle's overseer I have naturally assumed the mana of the Plantation Danley. I feel this to be in accord with what your uncle would have wished as he always dealt with me in a singularly generous manner.

"Your education in America," the letter went on, "may continue unimpeded, as I suspect you might wish, except for a possible interruption about which I suggest you call upon the law firm of Routledge & Coxe, on Commercial Screet in your city, with wheen I have corresponded at the same time this lec-

ter is written.

"Concerning your interrupted schooling, I beg to acquaint you with an inheritance law of our repo lic, which requires the presence on our soil of all persons having claim to any property within 60 days of the demise of the former owner, or the pror will be forfeited to the republic and sold to the high-

est bidder. "Accept, as if from an old and trusted friend who is as deeply grieved as you yourself must be, my most sincere condolences on your loss. I remain

Your obedient servant. Ericone Sangloire."

The letter dropped from my fingers and tears flooded my eyes, My Uncle Issish, my anchor, the only family I'd ever known, was gone. Never sgain would be bring gifts from far places for his little princess or fill her room with boisterous love

I turned to the man who had just emerged from an inner office. Easily as tall and broad-shouldered as my late Uncle Isaish, he wore a fitted frock cost skirted to

the knees front and back, a vest, and tight bell-bottomed trousers, all of somber broadcloth "With a rough of color." I moved, "he'd make quite a dandy." As it was, he appeared most impressive. He came closer, his hand outstretched, and I noted how his curly brown hair and thick side-whiskers made an attractive frame for a wide-browed face. But it was his eyes that were most arresting. They were the darkest of dark brown, and looking into them I found it difficult to turn

I had to admit that I found my uncle's lawyer, John Routledge, very attractive. But why was he trying to keep me from visiting my property

"You are Courselor Routledge?" I said. "Your father has favored me with his solicitude for a number of years." Our fingers touched, a tiny shock tingled to my wrist. I was startled. He instantly withdrew his hand, A shy smile began, then faded on his lips.

"The weather, the dryness," he explained in his deep voice, "I am John Routledge, and you have the advan-Danley, Selena Catherine Danley, My uncle . . . "

"Oh, of course!" I said "I rake it Mr. Sangloire has corresponded with

John Routledge touched a forefinger to his temple, wrinkled his brow. "Sangloire? Oh, the overseer in Santa Teresa! Yes, he has, in great detail. Tell me, Miss Danley," he leaned forward, "what do you know about

the island?" "Nothing. My uncle never spoke about it, and the in-stances of his visits to Boston were so rare we had too many other things to talk about. I assume you've been

three?" John Routledge settled back in his chair, blew out a cloud of smoke, "Several times, Miss Danley, I've been closely associated with your late uncle's affairs ever since my father's age and health made such journeys imprunt. It's really quite lovely. Warm days, cool nights, ab



you know. And the blacks—hard-working, charming but I fear impoverished: Ibos they were, Arada-Dahomeys, Gullahs, Ashantis, Yorubas."

He passed, his dark brown eyes bored into mine, and again I couldn't look away. "There's another side to Sanza Teresa," he said, "darker, loss appealing... but that's hardly for a genteel young lady." "Are there slaves there?" I said. "I'm an abolitionist."

"Are there slaves there?" I said. "I'm an abolitionist."
"No more. They took their coe from Saint Domingue, threw out the French, oh, forty-five years ago, and be-

came a free republic."

I was fingering the smulet Uncle Isaish had given me as a child, and on an impulse I withdrew it.

"Have you over seen anything like this, Counselor?"

I dinned the silver Chain over my head; held the oval

medallion toward him. He started, then quickly recov-

"Where did you get that barbaric thing?"

And once more I experienced his eyes on mine and I couldn't turn away. I replaced the amater. Then he re-leased me. Thark the only way I can express it. Some-

thing went out of his eyes and I was free.

"From Uncle Issish," I said. "I think I was six."
"It's very old," he said, "and probably quite valuable to an antiquarian, and I'm certain it has nostalgic significance to you, Miss Dauley, But forgive me, I don't think

I care to see it again!"

Linds to recall my own feelings on receiving the amelite to compare them with John Routzlege's unexpected

requested in v. was, after all, a rather fraghful suspenses.

A such a s

We would at one time have four children, at another time three, never fewer than two, because one is the number of loneliness, as I knew surposing well. But what does a Caribbean planter do? My entire experience with agriculture consisted in having failed as a

little girl to keep one of my governear's lush ported ferm warred so that it withered away. But surely there were books I might reed, almanacs I might consult? I foresaw a period of fascinating and rewarding study, a chance to learn, for a change, something I could sure.

learn, for a change, something I could use!
"Do you intend to go in person to Santa Teresa, Miss
Danley?"

I was brought out of my reverie.
"Isn't it one of their laws that I must?" I said.
"Ah, the ever-efficient Mr. Sangloire," John Routledge
said. "I think logal justification might be found for your

said. "I think logal justification might be found for your being represented by your uncle's executor, and luckily I can spare the time."

"You wish me to remain in Boston." I made it a flat

statement.
"I'm thinking only of your youth and inexperience,
Miss Danley. I'm in large measure responsible for yout

welfare for the next three years."
"There are attendant dangers, then)" I said.
John Routeldee spread his arms apart. "Inconveniences. A hot, dry Journey of two or three weeks, depending on the Westerlies, in a confining, ill-amelling merchastermu, poorly associated for a woman of refine

programme, it was, after all, a rather inglished scripent's "How exciting it sounds!" I said.

"Where did you get that barbaric thing?" John asked, when I showed him the amulet. Shaken, he told me. "Your uncle died from a venomous snake bite..."

head; but no, I hadn't been frightened, perhaps because it had been given by loving, trusted hands. "You're in the way of becoming a wealthy young lady," John Routledge said. "Your uncle left a will. Shall

I read it to you?"

He went to what looked like a varily enlarged spice cabinet against a wall, slid out one of many long black metal boxes, opened a flap on top of the box.

metal boxes, opened a flap on top of the box.

I said, "With all due deference to your calling, why not spare me a thousand whereas's and wherefor's and just tell me?"

He let the flap drop and came back to his desk, langle, "Desightful Whereas' and Mwerfeol' el The will allows you to continue your education or not, as you to continue your education or not, as you choose. Your under law squite people, about not interfering with your plans, Miss Dasley, You may many or not, again as you choose. Any money you may require from time to time will be provided in moderation at the electron tendence of the provided in moderation at the electron tendence at the moment of talkings to you.

"And upon your majority in life ine see—three years, correct?—you will succeed to the sole ownerthip of Planterion Danley! The rest is a thousand of your wheress's and wherefor's."

My head was awhirt with possibilities, I had never

devoted a great deal of time to musing about or planning for my future. Once in a while, observing a fine carriage clatter along the cobbbed streets of Boston, Pd imagine myself its occupant, mistress of a handsome Beacon Street manion, my husband engaged in the China trade. He regarded me for a moment in silence.

"May I at least arrange passage?" he said hopefully.

"Let me think about it. There is something you might rell me. I remember Uncle Issiah quire well—he was a big, strong, viral man. What kind of accident did be

The expectant expression left his face, replaced by disappointment. "Isn't the fact of the accident sufficient, Miss Danley?"

I said, "If you are unwilling to tell me, I suppose the explanation must await my serival."

John Routeldge siphed, folded his hands, stared at them. "Your uncle leasah died from the bite of a venomous stuke, Miss Danley. It bet him in the throat. Death was almost unastananous."

A little before dinner, two days after my visit to the lawyer, Miss Carsules brought me a note that was just delivered, and stood not far away while I read it: "Have something important about uncle's death, Must

delivered, and stood not far away while I read it:

"Have something important about uncle's death. Must
discuss with you. Will send carriage nine o'clock in
morung.

Routledge"

Promptly at nine the next morning, I enteted an awaiting broughtm and found it already occupied by a man with a face like well-transfel leather, whose flattened nose was the only indication he bore of possible Negro ancestry, He wore a semant's jacket and dungare trousers. As I ran, I looked back, and saw my kidnapper gaining! I knew now that someone wanted to keep me from leaving Boston, if he had to kill me!

"Routledge, he meet us later," he said, with an accent I couldn't identify.

I nodded but said nothing, nor did the seaman undertake further conversation. Thus in silence we rode for several miles. After some time, the scaman burrowed into a cloth hag at his feet. He uncorked a small bettle, whereupon the brougham filled instantly with the sharp smell of spirits. "Lord help this poor creature." I thought. "who has to drink so early in the morning!" The temperance lectures I'd attended were right-they couldn't leave the dreadful stuff alone! But instead of drinking. the seaman poured the bortle into a herchief. Suddenly he thrust the kerchief into my face! I tried to pull away but he grasped my shoulder, pushed the kerchief against my nose and mouth, and I lost consciousness.

I awakened with a headache, Iving on a plain straw et in a tiny, bare room that smelled of stale boer, dampoess, and rot. The warped wooden floor was of perged construction; in one corner several hoards had completely rotted away, exposing a time-darkened, handhown framing underneath. While this provided evidence of colonial origin, it gave me no indication of where I was. The room's dampness mercured nearness to water, but there was no sound or smell of the sea Had I been robbed? I dug francically in my bag, found

my few coms intact, and nothing else apparently missing. My amulet! But it hung reassuringly from its chain. The note from Counselor Routledge, then? I remembered poing it into my bag last night. The note was gone. Querly I crept to that corner where the floor was rosted. Below me, through the opening, I could see the burly back of a man seated at a table's edge. As I watched, he raised a bottle to his lips, swigged notsily, replaced it out of my sight. While he must have been the one who brought the food, he was too broad to have

Well! Since there seemed nothing I could do immediately I returned cautiously to the pallet and sat on it, hoping the burly man was a confirmed drunkerd who wouldn't stop drinking until the bottle was empty. After what seemed a good wait I tiptoed back for another peck, but was disappointed to find him still upright and drinking. I caught sight of the bottle before he set it down, however, and was hearetned to note only an ounce or so remained. Why didn't be finish it, and get drunk! This time I waited longer, until my horbs began to cramp, before edging to the hole. And lo! John Barley-



corn had accomplished his celebrated work, for the man was stretched out on the table, the empty bortle alongside his bead I ran outside into a crooked little cobbled street bordered by uneven brick sidewalks. A cold, buing wind

blew off the Charles River, and my! that wind felt good! I was free at last, but in what part of the city? Around me sollen buildings of faded red brick were crowded, as if seeking warmth; rickety, wooden, two-grory houses haddled naked, unpainted for years, with loosened shiplap sides and oiled-paper windows; on the ground stood puddles of ill-smelling liquid, poles of refuse. A thin, rack-ribbed dog skulked past me Then I had it. The North End! The Irish! Out of the frying pan! Not a hundred yards away my kidnapper

rocked along in a seaman's gait! We saw each other in the "Wate-Routledge coming!" he should.
"So's Christmas!" I should back. I caught up my skirts

and ran. The uneven bricks of the adewalk cur through the thin soles of my shoes. I rushed headlong, afraid to look behind, afreid not to, and when I threw a backward glance I saw my kidnapper was gaining! On I dashed breathing hard. "Selena Catherine," I told myself, ever you ran before, run now!"

had. And now, I must ask you to trust me-for a little while. And thank you for all you've done-including saving my life for the second time!"

He covered my hand with kisses, held it against his cheek for a moment, and said, "I will trust you. Lisa. I must, because I love you. Rest. now

He left the room quickly, and I felt a little piqued when I learned that he'd stormed out of the hospital, though I couldn't say I blamed him In a few days I was well enough to leave for Zurich, where I was to meet John Alleshy-but not before some through an exhausting, and at times harrowing, investigation of my parents' death by the Swiss police. I told them about the missing brooch and earrings, and how the brooch here I doubt if it will make you feel any better," he added wryly, "but they've had your friends, the Thorndykes, under surveillance for some time. They were about to close in. but then, you flew the coop, and

them went their best witness! I grouned "Oh, what a fool I've been!" Then I felt my heart beating fast as I asked, "But Nicholas Nikonos-how did he get the

He shrusped "He is innocent. He bought it from the Thorndykes for a stiff price, sure that they were reputable dealers. And they were, The people you knew were not the real Lord Cocil and Lady Ellen, but

imposters. I have a hunch that the real Thorndykes were buried many venrs ago. I shuddered, overcome with

How could I accuse him now? Yet I was certain that Nicholas was involved in the plot to destroy me!

had reappeared as a gift of Nacholas Nihonos, I told them about my father's mysterious last words, "Stop them .. get the letter." They were haffled. Their thorough search of the wreckage had revealed no jewels or letter. One thing would substantiate my story-finding the broach in the gorse. They would ask the French police to cooperate by making a search. In the meantime, nothing

could be done I was relieved to meet John Allenby in Zunch-crisp, dapper and efficient as always. To my surprise, he ushered me to a quiet corner of the hotel dinme room, ordered coffee. and asked abruntly, "Miss Lowell, did you know that your father was a

socret agent?" The idea of Daddy, wealthy art dealer and one of the distinguished Lowells of Massachusetts, being a secret agent made me burst out laughing "Whoever gave you that idea?" I asked.

"Scotland Yard," he replied, and instantly I became as sober as he was. After your call, I thought it wise to seek their advice because of the suspicious nature of his death. To my amazement, they told me that he had volunteered to work with the internatronal police to work with the international police in an effort to break a ring of jewel thieves who have been operating very successfully.

remorse because I'd treated Nicholas so badly. Dear Nicholas! I must find him at once!

I rushed upstairs to my suite, determined to call all Europe, if need be. Not far behind me rushed tobe Allenby, waving papers and gasping, "But you haven't read the will! Outside the door, we both storned cold, at the sound of loud voices in-

side my suite. Voices I knew well! There were some words we voice, shouting, "You can kill me if you must but let Lisa go free!" "Wait. I'll get the police." John whispered, but before he could ston me. I was hulfway through the door, shouting, "No! No!"

There was Lady Ellen, disheveled and half-crazed, brandishing a sharp axe! I froze as she turned on me, shrinking, "You couldn't keen out of this! Now you'll die!"

Swiftly, Nicholas moved behind her, pinning her arms and forcing her to drop the axe Just then, John Allenby arrived with the police, who moved in fast and histled hwe away. They'd already caught Lord Cecil, beading for the unartment with a

A search at the villa later turned up the missing earrings, as well as the brooch. Daddy had intended to use them as a lure to trap the Thorndykes but being ruther an amateur

To the Woman Who Would Like to Work...but Can't Leave Home!

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He can see your FREE!

Brookkeeping, one field where veryon one the men fitthers at the experience of the men fitthers at the experience you give to be more fitted by the property of the fitted by the property of the fitted by the property of the fitted by the fitted mean oil Donnelium may blice whole made of fail dame brookkeppers — meal beauteronies. But the owner of the control generaty, the gas institute beauty shop, real whole office, lawyers and doe lows often use? affined a fail time brookkepper to face, they form need one. But, they do have been become.

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by Uncle Issiah when I was little snrang to mind, of fabled, gold encrusted palaces and far-flung, lazy islands washed by samphire seas

signed to my going, and pressed a package into my hands, "Lemous, " she said. "To prevent scurvy!" I hassed het again. She moved to the gangway. John Routledge took my hand and held it longer than he might have, looked into my eyes with an expression I

couldn't fathom. "God go with you, Miss Danley." On the evening of the fifth day out of Boston, I lay attempting to sleep, not yet accustomed to my hot, muggy quarters recking of fish oil, mildew, and stagment water surpling through scuppers, nor to all the creaks, groans, scrapes, and knocks as the schooner La Liberre strained, thumping and rolling, over the sea.

Suddenly I was wide awake, thinking I heard someone in the passageway outside my cabin.

In the morning I found that my imagination had not played tricks on me. When I pulled the doot inward a small object tumbled into my cabin. It was a simple rog doll, intended to be musculine, for it was provided with trousers. A scrap of parchment was wrapped around its middle. This I pulled off. On it was written "Maitre Danley" in a Spencerian hand! And imbedded in the neck, or at least where the head joined the body, were two bone-like things. These, I knew with a sudden

weight in my stomach, were make fangs Panic began to rise within me, to which I might entity have succumbed under other circumstances, but I recognized somehow that I must not permit whoever on board wanted to frighten me to learn he had succeeded. To whom could I turn, alone amidst strangers on an unfriendly sea, and to whom appeal? Only to that source I had so frequently called upon in past periods of distressto mystlf, and to what I'd been taught

"O friend," says our worthy Mr. Emerson, "never strike sail to a fear! Come into port greatly, or sail with God the seas." Which was of some comfort, but took nothing from my fright. Who wished me harm, and why? Gingerly, I removed the fangs from the doll's neck and dropped them into my portmanteau to be investigated later. The

doll I brought on deck to Captain Grigenux.

I hursed and kissed Miss Carstairs, She smiled, re-

Santa Teresa, my island of destiny, indeed! But what My imagination had pictured to me an island spront-ing with palm trees and little else. I think I expected to see outrigger canoes drawn up on sandy beaches, and somewhere deep in the island a volcano ought to have trailed smoke against the sky. I was most pleasantly surprised, therefore, to find Cap Therese-Santa Teresa's capital and major port-quite a lovely little town, vivid

shrilled against a cloudless sky, further proof of landfall

kind of destiny?

with color under the hot noon-day sun. I crunched along a street payed with crushed shells. searching for a sign somewhere in English, for I placed not too much trust in my school book French. I think in a way I hoped to find posted directions to Plantation

Danley! At this point a black, well-polished surrey drawn by a dun mare drew to a stop nearby. From it stepped a tall, gray-haired, old, white gentleman with a flowing moustache, wearing a heavy, blue, military swallowtail cost,

and blue trousers. With a vigorous voice the old gentleman said, "The mademoiselle is in difficulties?

Under his stern gaze I felt my French would prove inadequare. "I seem to be lost," I said in English. "Ah. Anglais!" he shouted, and he smiled for the first time, which made the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes more pronounced

"But how can this be?" he said in excellent but secented English, "It is only the old who are lost, not so? And who might you be, young lady?"

"I am Selena Carberine Danley, from Boston, sir." At the mention of my name the old man's smile disanpeared, and I had an impression of stiffness, of distance, and of distaste, Coldly, he said, "You are Isaish Danley's

daughter, then?" "His niece, I scarcely knew him." Now I was puzzled because all his former friendliness

Suddenly, I thought I heard someone outside my cabin. I found a strange doll, with my name on it, outside the door. In its neck were two snake fangs!

returned, and he seized my hand. "I am Dr. Paul Gaspard-Desor," he said, pumping my hand energetically. "The cirizens of this republic have seen fit to honor me with the position of Minister of

I was unprepared for his reaction. He snatched it from my hands and heaved it over the side! "Nastv!" he said. "L'jw-jw, Porndon! So! We cast the evil in the sca! Let it frighten the fish!"

He did not see fit to amplify his words or his action, nor did I press him. He did, however, offer to place a night watch at my door. I found this most agreeable, and thanked him profusely. The rest of the voyage I spent in mild apprehension but no manifest danger. One bright morning, seventeen days out of Boston, I

was summoned to the quarterdeck. "There, young miss!" said Captain Grigtaux, "Landfall! Santa Teresa, your ile d'destinee." He pointed to the horizon. I beheld what seemed a flat, gray rock set in a sparkling, szure sea. Above out ship, gulls wheeled and

Health, very probably because no younger man was qualified, not so? You will give my wife, Agnes, and me the pleasure of a visit, Miss Danley? Agnes Gaspard-Desor tapped lightly at the open door

"We've had a good sleep, haven't we?" she said. "Paul is long onne to his office, but we agree that you must stay with us. We'd like to introduce you to some of our peosle here-I know of at least three handsome young lads who would turn handsprings to meet you!" Somehow the idea of three French gentlemen turning

handsprings struck my funny bone, but I had the pres-ence to stifle my giggle. "You're very kind," I said. "I've enjoyed my stay, I truly have, but I really must get along to the plantation.

Is there some way?"

Agnes sighed, lifted her shoulders in a gentle shrug, "We plan for all contingencies," she said sadly, "Our earriage is downstairs. You'll go to Deschane Freres, the sugar brokers. I'm sure they will make arrangements." At the door of their house Agnes took my hand, "You're going to such a lonely, isolated life for one so young," she said. "Isn't there any way I can convince you to stay with us a little longer?"

The woman's kindness and sincerity momentarily sad-

"If you wish, I'll come and visit you later," I said. "I'll pray for you, dear. Write us when you're safely

there," she said. Just then a dusty, four-wheeled, open road wagon swerved to a stop in front of us, throwing a shower of

seashell they use here for paying,

From the wagon jumped a tall, slender Negro. He wore a blue swallowtail military coat like Dr. Gaspard-Desor's, but ever so much grander, with festoons of gold braid and huge epaulets. He swept off a three-cornered hat, exposing a head completely bald, and made us a most

courtly bow. "Madame Gaspard-Desor," he said breathlessly, "is your estimable husband, by any chance, at home?" "Paul's stready left for the ministry," Agnes said. "Ah,

Lieutenant Carre, let me present a visitor, Mademoiselle Selena Danley, from America." "Another killing-I need your husband's medical

my hand, "Well, Monsieur Plesy, I am Selena Catherine Danley, and I think I might be your employer!"

Jean-Baptiste dropped my hand and stepped back, his "I'm not going to discharge you," I said burriedly, "At

least not if you can take me to the plantation!" "But I have no coach nor carriage suitable for the Maitresse," he said. "I have only a sim Ne weenst "Even a donkey cart will do," I said. "When may we leave>"

"We must ride today and all night, Maitresse." 'In which direction?" I said, "We go north."

He glanced nervously behind him, under the seat. My eyes followed his. On the floor lay a rusty flintlock musket.

We had for some time been passing through country abounding in great, shadowy trees, lean-Baptiste searched on our note, and our pace slowed as he leaned forward, peering into the pale radiance from our lantern.

Now he reined up, pointing to another path that turned off from ours, barely visible. "Only about a mile to Plantation Labroussier, Maitresse. Good place to spend the night-I have my stepfather there, and M'sieu Hippolyte Labroussier knew my mother."

I balanced police lieutenant Carre's causion to travel only by day against my own need to get to my late

He sighed, flicked the reins, and we resumed our origi-

nal course. The night was cool, the air filled with a thou-

sand perfumed scents, yet I had some miselvines and an

Cap Therese was a lovely town, but in spite of ominous warnings of trouble in the north, I was eager to reach the plantation and claim my inheritance . . .

arm

opinion." Worry showed on Agnes's face. "Mademoiselle Danley will be traveling toward the north," she said. "Is there likely to be danger? My ears perited up. Both Doctor Gaspard-Desor and that old sea dog, Captain Grigenux, had mentioned trouble in the north

Lieutenant Carre gave me a quick, social smile. "Travel only by day, mad moiselle." With a precise salute he leaped into his road wagon and galloped off. I climbed into the black surrey I'd ridden in yesterday,

At length, we reached a series of long, low stucco buildings around which clustered wide pyramids of hoge brown horsheads and nest little rows of small casks. "M'sieu Deschane too busy," the coachman said, "He send this boy, Jean-Baptiste."

I climbed from the surrey, the coschman dropped my baggage from the back, leaped in, slapped the reins, and dashed off without so much as a nod! Jean-Baptiste, I perceived, was a lad of about my own

age, not broad but tinewy, very dark, with a face so handsome I immediately pictured him among the palace guard in the court of Cleopatra! "I sm Jean-Baptiste Plesy of Plantation Danley," he said in French. While I thought this quite correct but somewhat stiff,

"No, let's go on," I said. unessiness beset me as we journeved-no kindly farmhouse lights twinkled warmly along our way, and all I had for company was Jean-Baptiste, silent again, and the cold, far stars in a dark sky. We traveled about an hour when I heard the drums! I seized Jean-Baptiste's

uncle's property as soon as possible.

A few hundred feet shead of us the path flickered or-ange from a huge bonfire, the tips of its flames forking and leaping above the brush. I strained my eyes to no avail; whatever action was taking place was concealed by heavy foliage. With Jean-Baptiste's attention not on his driving, the horse's pace had slowed. Now he stopped, A crude cordwood barricade blocked the path. We couldn't go forward, nor was there any way to turn around; my apprehension mounted; and the drums changed beat

loudly to doom, diti-diti doom, diti-diti doom, Jean-Baptiste reached behind the seat, hefted the flintlock musket. "Wait, Maitresse," he whispered. "I clear the road."

But he made no move to do so. "And I'm to stay here?" I said. "Alone? Not at all,

Monsieur Plesy!" I started to dismount but Jean-Baptiste's arm restrained

I was happy beyond belief to hear the plantation named. Almost I'd begun to doubt its existence! I reached out

STEEP INTO

OTHER STORE MACHINE

ANNO NEEDEST STIEBER STARS...

Jean Harlow, W. C. Fields, Mac West, Babe Ruth, Tom Mix. Retty Grable Rudolph Valentino.

Nicholas, again! So-it was he who Humphrey Bogart, Sonja had rammed us. Accidentally, or ... Henie Clara Bow. "He wanted to see you, but the Wm. S. Hart, Al Jolson.

doctor told him to so home and set a ennd rest. He sends you his best regards. 'Thank you," I said, Dear

Salvatore! How glad I was that he wasn't hurt! "The other pentleman wants to see

ou, too," the nurse continued, "but first, you'd better see the doctor." I tried to gather my strength and eet my wits about me. I had to tell the doctor my side of the story. before Nicholas and the Thorndykes

talked him into making me so back with them! To my amazement, in walked Dr. Gaspard! Now I knew why the nurse had looked familiar. This was the same clinic where my father had died-and Dr. Gaspard had attended

I managed a weak smile, "You must think accidents run in our family," I said "Thank heaven this one is not so serious," he said, with a smile, "Now

tell me-how do you feel?" "I feel desperate." I blurted. "Doctor, please help me." But my dear young lady, what is

the trouble?" As fast as I could say them, the words came tumbling out-all my fears and suspicions from the time

my parents died The doctor looked thoughtful, and said nothing. Probably he thought these were merely the demented ravings of a person near hysteria "You don't believe me, do you?" I

more, he had saved me! When I regained consciousness, I brain: Why did she look so familiar

You're going to be all right," the nurse said, smiling, "A slight concussion, a lot of bruises, and a broken

arm we'll have to set when you feel un to it. You were very lucky-you

"Not a scratch! He must lead a charmed life. And the man who ran

into you paid for all his vegetables,

with enough left over to buy a new

I sank back on the pillow

were thrown clear of the truck." A ways of fear chilled me. "And Salvatore?" I managed to gasp. The nurse smiled broadly now.

I whispered

there, holding me tenderly. Once

was in a hospital room, a nurse in starchy white hovering over me. A My body ached all over. My arm was bandaged. "W-what happened?"

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INTO THE PAST Pick Up Your Copy Now!*

***** *For Old Time's Sake

"Please, Mairesse, I cansoc permit . . " And he stipped quietly from the seat. I watched associately as he passed beyond the dim light of our lastern. The drumant and cassed; I could feel the silence pressing in aroundout me, and my heart throbbing in my head. The night, the place, my pressone, all serend to freeze into slent immobility. My fears grew as the illence deepened. Then I heard Jean-Benjtes shout in the distance.

"Maitresse, run, run!"

I shouted back, "What is it? Where are you?"
There followed a noise near me in the brude, scuffling
and outeries. Half-tasked Negroes brandishing mechess
burn'from the undergrowth sround me. Before I could
do anything, strong sams palled me from the seat I
scennind, asked, ethowed; I pounded with my fists, I
bit. I scratched—then I was seized too tightly to move,
and half-drasoved, half-tasked noward the bonding.

My cantors now released my arms. I could see neither women nor children around the fire, only men, bare to the waist. We were in the center of what must have been a hastily made clearing. At one edge a thatched but had been thrown up. I saw Jean-Baptiste gesticulating, argu-ing with a huge half-naked man in a language strange to my ears, although it hinted of French. From the way in which the huge man kept looking toward me I knew I was the subject of the argument. Seemingly dissatisfied with the answers he got from Jean-Baptiste, the man shuffled toward me, dragging Jean-Baptiste by his arm This man stood well over six feet tall, extraordinatily muscled, with gigantic shoulders and narrow waist. A frightful scar slanted from just above his left eye across his nose to his right cheek, giving his face a loosided, evil expression. He stared at me menacingly, and I stared right back, my fear becoming displaced by indignation. Scarface said something in his unfamiliar tongue to lean-Baptiste, who translated, his eyes wide with terror. "The Liberator Julien Darsq wants to know why you y upon simple country people while they are at wor-p. Answer in French, Maitresse, He speaks Creole and

will understand."

The scarfaced Julien Darsq nodded.

I shouted, "How dare this, this canaille frighten young guf half to death? I'll tell him nothing!"

As my baggage was loaded in the simple cart, I noticed a musket under the seat. My driver was a Negro boy, no older than I. We didn't dream that we would ride into a voodoo camp filled with terror! winted wanting; jean-shabete wingles over all small britted and langed at Darreyt Antimal-swift, Darrey larged states, and Jean-Stoptister's bades rapped see which matched from the siz. The two more devicted warley. Darrey flicked his machete as if shaking off water; Jean-Baptise stepped courtiously idealways, his arm out full length, his write making small circles with his tiny kink!— I weedwid, heart in mouth, fisherfully aware of the

length, his wrise making simile circles with his toly studie. The smooth, there in mouth, fightfully were modeled by the studies of the smooth of the smooth

Daraq ment have enjoyed porting on a show for his followers when Jean-Baptiste had been armed only with his toy; now that the odds were more nearly even his eyes never strayed from Jean-Baptiste, and perspiration broke out on his forehead, Jean-Baptiste's attention was



completely on Daraq, so that when the "Liberator" picked an opportune moment to jerk his head at his followers, six, seven, eight of them jumped poor Jean-Baptiste from behind, and be went down without a

They dragged him up, pulled him over next to me. I smiled my thanks at him, but he cast his gaze to the ground. Darag jerked his head at a man near the fire, who pulled out a flaming branch and moved toward me with exaggerated slowness, making quick, jabbing feints with his torch. I understood the meaning all too well. But just as the man got near, and I felt pulses of heat on my face, a hunchback limped up to Darag. The "Liberator" leaned down, the bunchback whispered in his ear, and a malicious grin twisted Darag's face. With a short, evil laugh, he directed that our hands be bound behind us. Then we were dragged to the edge of the clearing and

Jean-Baptiste shouted, "They blow conch! They see us! Run! He leaped to his feet, grasped my hand, jerked me We had got across the clearing when my foot caught

in the brush, and down I went! "Jean-Baptiste!" He whirled, swung back, reached for me, but too late! They were upon us, and three of them ro each one of our arms, taking no chances, they dragged us back to the fire, to Darag, to the waiting cross,

Darag jerked his head; two men readied the ropes on the arms of the cross. Glaring at me, Darag came close. He reached one of his enormous hands to my throat. I shrank back, but he grasped me roughly. His fingers touched the chain at my neck. He wrenched out the me-

He screamed, "Aveda! Aveda-Wedo!" His face con-

roughly thrust inside a hut, a mere cone of palm fronds. The hunchback sided through the opening. He had us torted in fear. He let go of me, shouted at the rest of dumped to the ground, where our limbs were bent back

The big man reached for my throat, saw my amulet, and screamed, "Ayeda-Wedo!"

and tied to our wrists lust before they all left, the hunchback fixed on me a look of pure hitred. "Soon, good lesson for you, white!"

After a while the drums stopped, the noise of drunken carousing lessened, and gesticulating shadows ceased to flit across the hut's entrance. When all had been still for a few minutes, and the only sound was that of my beating heart. I planned to get us untied. Then, if our captors were asleep and we were quiet enough . . While Daran and his cohorts excelled at frightening

and bullving, when it came to knots they didn't know a biohe from a bowline. But Uncle Issish did, and I gave thanks for the dozens of hours spent in childhood, while he drilled me in the intricate mysteries of Carrick bend, Turk's Head, cat's paw, reef knot, his fingers over mine, And in between his visits, I'd had plenty of time to practice. There were obviously no sailors among Daraq's men, for they thought lots of wrapping meant security, and in moments I had freed Jean-Baptiste's hands. It took him longer to free mine, then we released the bonds at our ankles.

I poked my head through the entrance, which faced the clearing. In the flickering orange glow of the bonfire, dozens of sleeping figures lay. Outlined against that fire was a kind of cross, perhaps seven feet tall. Loops of rope hone from its arms. I could guess for whom it was intended, and my heart sank. To make good our escape we would have to traverse

some fifteen vards of ground, exposed to the view of anyone awake, before reaching the sprawl of jungle beyond. I crept from the but on hands and knees, motioned lean-Bapeiste to follow. The ground was rough with stones and chopped brush, and the going painfully slow, but we had crawled about three yards so far without awakening our captors. We inched forward. The firelight faded, and with quickening hope I beheld the jungle looming up shead, dark, silent, protective, Another foot, And another . . . Suddenly a blast like a foothorn split the night.

They ran in terror, "They think you bride of big snake god," Jean-Baptiste said.

the men, and ran! The conch shell blew two blasts. The men at the cross dropped the ropes; the others dashed, leaped, staggered into the brush, and shortly the only sound remaining was the crackling of the dving fire. During the whole of my captivity I had retained some

semblance of reason, of control. But now that my ordeal seemed ended, I began to shake and tremble with the import of what might have happened! Jean-Baptiste powder, then inspected my throat, which ached when I gulped sir to calm myself. "These are brigands, Maitresse-thieves, robbers, out-

casts. My people not like this!" "What does 'Ayeda' mean?" I said, as we made our way to our cooveyance. "I am good Christian, I attend Sunday mass, I know

my estechism. I don't believe in that," he said. "Yes, fine, bur what did Darsq mean?" "Aveda is powerful log, goddess from Guines, Maitresse. She is married to Damballa, big snake god. Daraq thinks you will be bride of Damballa-Wedo."

The rutted dirt path we followed for some time had been rising. Jean-Baptiste flicking the reins to encourage our poor, sway-backed horse toward continued effi Now our pace quickened—we were going downfall. Dawn spilled over the hills around us, touching pinkly the expanse of the valley below, and driving away my

Jean-Baptiste turned, smiling at me.
"Welcome, Maitresse," he said. "Welcome to Plantation Danley! Last night you thought 'maybe I never arrive!' " Over the valley the plantation stretched as far as the eve could see. I observed that much of the land was

forebodings

cleared and cultivated, that other sections still abounded in palms and trees I couldn't identify. As we continued downward, fragments of shouts and singing drifted up to us. The plantation's extent staggered my imagination. It seemed endless, a vast sea of fields, trees, crops, Here and there nestled tiny clusters of hots on brown rectangles of lund, and more hurs at the edges of dark green squares.

When Jean-Bapeiste finally stopped our trap I was
quite unprepared for the edifine which met my view.

There locened a large, rectangular two-storied Georgian
manor house, a type sometimes called colonial, back
home.

"What can the inside be like?" I thought aloud.
"I have never entered the greathouse, Maitresse," said

Jenn-Baptiste without the least resentment.

Puzzled, I looked at him.

"The field workers do not do this." he said. "only the

servants are permitted." And he shrogged to show his acceptance of custom.
"Well then, am I to announce myself?" I said, a bit put

Due no. Mairesset! Jean-Baptiete flashed his fine, infectious smile. "All sight the drums have an oncourced year. As if to substantiate his words, a retinue of servants dressed in corton and musiin finery—yellow, white, red, and pruk, with mutching and contrasting kerchlers on their heads—marched upon us, captained by a white man of medium beath wearure riding breeches, brilliantly

pointed thrown boost, and a shart with ruffled cuttle, open at his throat.

"Medamoistic Sciena," this man said ni perfect Englad, flawleadly promounced, "how good it is to see you? I write to you in Boston—I am Edentic Singhaes." And Eng a reason is concident fashors. In the appeared Mr. Sengloire to be fire, bad, an four from a Greetan freezefier, astrony most with fast, a fact from a Greetan freezefier, astrony most with fasting middling over his forthests, everloyers almost familiate in delicary. His spee I pupel

systems amone remanue in cancery, ris get 1 judges to be under thirty-five. His large eyes lingered upon me, the merest suggestion of a smile on his full, semissi lips.

"I am devastrated" he said. "I had no idea! I imagined you a bony schoolgirl, with your uncle's face—bearded! Who could have thought leasth Danley's nices so beauti-

ful a girl!"
I colored, felt my heart beating.
"But you must be famished," he said quickly. "If you will find it agreeable to have the company of so talkative

"Incrediblet" he said. "This Dursq once worked on the plantation! He was more interested in strings up grivances than curring cane—he even strucked you make but M'sea Dauley grabbed a machete and made his uply face worse! I fired the man yeal! I have heard he las associated himself with other makecontent—and the last proposed in the same as a functed for a policensum.

he killed—Mademoiselle Selena, you are very backyl May I see this talisman you speak of?" I withdrew my amulet. Sangloire briefly studied the open-mouthed serpent, turned the medallion delicately in

"Good," he said lightly, "yoo are under Damballa's protection—the very chief of the thousand gods of Africa. Be careful what you do, Mademoiselle Selena, I bear Damballa is a most jealous god!" And he wagged a

schoolnuster's finger.

I was uncertain how to take this Mr. Sangloire, but I did react to what I considered a mocking, patronizing attitude.

"Blast your dratted heateur?" I said hotly. "And blast your French rationalism! What has it got you but a Reign of Terror, the guillotine, and Waterloo!"

Sangloire sat back in his chair, convulsively laughing until he coughed, while I burned with indignation. Finally, he gained control of himself.

"But you are marvelous, mademoiselle! A spirifire from Boston! Incredible! Now was there not a flag of your colonies, a snake, as I remember, in thirtnen segments, with the legend 'Don't tread on me'? Ah, Etienne, you trod, and were bitten!" And again he rocked with laughter.

My cheeks were afame as I stood up from the breakfast table, and with as much dignity as I could musc, swept out of the room, leaving Sangloire—I hoped in that moment—to choke on his infernal lughter. So noiseless had been her amprach, it was several mo-

that moment—to choke on his infernal laughter.

So noiseless had been her approach, it was several moments before I became sware of the short, heavy Negress
standing behind me, her head wrapped in a yellow kerchief. Her face bore the ravages of an old pox, yet was
not without quiet dignity and compouter, a face which
me without quiet dignity and compouter, a face which

said to all but the less sensitive who observed it, "I belong to me, to no one else."

e so beautiful!" Etienne Sangloire

We breakfasted royally in the kitchen at the rear of the house on eggs, bacon, strong, bitter coffer produced locally, and a cinnamon-sprinkled pudding they call manuse, which I recognized haspidy as tapicez.

your adventures."

I narrated to Sangioire all that had befailen me since the arrival of his letter in Boston. I took particular pairs in describing the earringed Negro who'd warned me not to leave. Sangioire followed my account most attentively, nod-

Sangioire followed my account most attentively, nodat appropriate intervals, flattered me by saying he'd certainly recognize the man by my description should be ever chance to see him. At my recounting my capture by leilen Daras, his lively face became even more animated. "Your chamber is ready, Mistress," she said, in accented English.

She led me up a broad staircase in midhall, each step fitted with two spiral balusters. At the head of the stairs

ran another long, dim hallway parallel to the one below, along which we proceeded to the last chamber. We were, I was sure, directly above the kitchen. My heavyset guide paused before optning the door.

"This was Maerer Danley's room," she said. "Some of bir furnishings have been moved to the drawing room.

his furnishings have been moved to the drawing room. Some of her tremain."
"Mester Danley's room?" I said. "I was told your revolution did away with slavery."
"Not everything changes with new laws, Mistress. Not

"Not everything changes with new laws, Mistress. Not in this place." And her lips tightened resentfully. She opened the door. "If you need something, call me. I am Clotilde-Marie." She padded off in her silent way.

I seated myself on the edge of the bed, finding that whatever they'd used for bedding was most agreeably soft and yielding. Only then did the implications of Clotilde-Marie's remark strike me. I'd never known my uncle was married. What had become of his wrife?

Like a princess—alas, no longer little—visiting her resilm, I was treated for the next three days to a tour of my uncle's vast holdings by Etienne Sanglotre, whose Gallic charm went a great way toward making up for my first impression of the man. His attentiveness and consideration seemed an apology for his earlier behavior, without actually being one, and I will confess that my heart beat faster whenever he easually took my hand while leading me around the plantation, or fixed his large, dark

eyes on me, watching my reactions Through heavy brush we passed into a small clearing, upon a scene which burned into my consciousness. With arms outstretched and tied to a wooden frame, his back to us, a man was being flogged with a leather flail. Two red stripes already showed on his back. As I watched

horror-stricken, a big man doing the beating raised his

"Stop!" I screemed Everyone but the victim turned to stare. Then, from the brush at the far rim of the clearing, stepped a wizened little spider of a black man with white, frizzled heir. wearing only cotton pantaloons too small even for him. and someone's discarded frock cost without sleeves more beatings on this plantation!" Filled with cold fury, I pointed my finger at the unfortunate who remained tied to the frame. Two of the bystanders understood, cut his wrists loose, and he instantly fled. "Mademoiselle, when they do not perform their work

." Sangloire began. "Sangioire began.
"No living creature will be beaten on this property,
ever!" I said, "Is that clear, Mr. Sangioire?" He said nothing, but his eyes flashed as he tossed the flail to the

Ton-ton Baze cocked his shriveled little head at me "You are the new Danley," he said, "Selena, Of the moon. Do you miss your girls' school in 'Merica, Selena?"

He spot in the ground, disappeared into the brush, laugh-From that day forward I began to notice a subtle change in attitude toward me among the house servants. Even the mysterious, distant Clotilde-Marie appeared to unbend a bit. Unexpectedly, one night shortly fol-

lowing the incident of the flogging, the heavy woman brought a glass of milk to my chamber just before I retired "You did well the other day, Mistress," she said, placing the milk on the candlestand "I'd have done as much for anyone," I said, "I can't stand seeing even an animal mistrested," I parced a place

beside me on the bed, but Clotilde-Marie wasn't prepared to unbend that much. "Oh, I don't care what happens to those field niggers,"

"Stop!" I screamed. "No living creature will be beaten on this property. Is that clear, Mr. Sangloire?" His eves flashed as he tossed the flail away.

much too large, from which his thin arms and frail body showed.

"Ton-ton Baze!" cried the big fellow, plainly frightened. He let drop the flail The strange little man spat into the ground.

"You were warned, Antoine," he said in French to the flogger. His voice was surprisingly resonant for a man so small. "The los Ti-Jean-petto of the one leg told you 'do no more bearings for Danley, you like it too much.' I, Ton-ton Baze, myself saw him do this. These others, they saw, too,"

The rest of the men nodded, grunted, looked uncomfortable. The big fellow called Antoine actually began to "Ton-ton Baze, I don't want to die," he whimnered. "Tell the los I am a good man, please-I will bring to

your critte a fat suckling pig." Ton-ton Baze appeared to consider this gravely for a time. "I will ask," he said. He turned contemptuously to Sangloire, "You, Frenchman, aristocrat, San have outlived your master Isaiah! But great Damballa is patient-he waits, he watches!"

"Now you get out!" Sangloire shouted, "I do not want you and your damned ju-ju and your gris-gris and your chicken blood on this property!"

Sangloire stooped, picked up the flail, made as if to

strike him. "No!" I shouted, suddenly finding my voice, "He's an old man!" I grasped Sangloire's arm. "There will be oo

she said, waving her hand violently. "But you stood up to Sangloire!" A new esteem shone in her eyes "And that little spider of a man," I said, "that Ton-ton

Baze, who is he?" Fear came over Clotilde-Marie's pock-marked faces her lips formed an ø, and she crossed kerself. When the spoke again her voice was hushed, and her eyes darred from one side of the room to the other

"Oh, Mistress, speak respectfully of that man, pleasel He is bungen-how would you say?-priest of the vendant, voodoo-he talks to the Grainer los, and they talk to him. I have seen his power! Do not call that man a

spider!" Clotilde-Marie's sincerity was so obvious, and her fear so genuine, that I pursued the topic no further. But since she seemed more open, more inclined toward friendship than previously, I felt it would do no harm to find out about some of the goings-on in this house before my

"What happened to my uncle's wife?" I said. Clotilde-Marie had moved to the door, "His wife?" she

"Oh, come now. You told me just the other day some of this furniture was here." For the first time since I'd known her Clotilde-Marie

allowed herself to smile, disclosing a gap in her from "They stay together in this room," she said with raised eyebrows. "Why should he marry her?"

Thid saked, and now I had been rold. I blushed.

"That was many year ago, Mistress," said Clocible-harie. "Her name was Oddie. She was beaufful—her skin was as light-color as yours—aug-wafer we say. It is said by some, Odlie was the daughter of a mulatto winnan from Cap Thereas."

"And who was her father, then?"

"They say Ton-ton Baze." She slipped out the door.

☐ I woke next morning more rested and refreshed than at any time since I'd left Boxton, Nearing the kitchen door, I heard Sangloire speaking

inside, and another voice—familiar, deeper—which caught my breath and made my heart race. Sangloire merely nodded when I opened the door, but John Routledge jumped to his feet, the shy smile I remembered so well on his line.

bered so well on his lips.

"Miss Danley, how good to see you! And more beautiful, if possible, than in Boston!"

Sanghoire smiled icily, got to his feet. "With your permission," he said, "I have a plantarion to run—sharp eyes are needed more than ever. Mademoiselle, m'sicu?" He bowed slightly and left us. John's eyes followed

him to the door, furned back to me.

"May we speak in private?" he said. I morioned the girl out of the kitchen. "I go a letter from the authorines in Cap Therese right after you'd left," John said. "Some meddling woman put a bug in their ear that your uncle's death wasn't an accident, but delibrare and calculated.

"I'll do what you sak, just you keep Sangloire away from me," she said, throwing up her heavy arms in surrender. "But Ton-ton Baze, he won't come to Plantation Danley, not for all the chickens in the country?"

Clotilde-Marie was right.

She had sen Jean-Baptize and the tall, angular kitchen helper, Sor Antoinette Jarat, to Ton-ton Baze who had kept the chickens, but chased both of them away, refusing to come anywhere near the plantarion.

"He says if you want to see him you go to his calle,"

ing to come anywhere near the plantation.

"He says if you want to see him you go to his colle,"
said Jean-Baptiste. "He says you bring bocon. He says
you go tonight."

So, early that evening, Jean-Baptiste dropped a slab of bacon in the back of an open-bed spring wagon, I elimbed onto the seat alongside him, and we rattled off towards the hills.

towards the hills.

I ducked under the small opening, entered the round, palm frond wall of the caille.

Ton-ton Baze sat cross-legged on the dirt floor. A small fire in a pit cast leaping shadows over his tiny figure so that he appeared to shrink and swell, grow long then shoot. He still wore his ridiculously large frock coat,

then short. He still wore his ridieulously large frock coat, the sleeves missing.

"Odile is dead," he said.

My God! He knew about my school; he knew about my quest! s "How... how did you know that?" I said, "Isaish Danley"—he spat again—"took this young

morder!"

child Odde, and when he used her all up he sold her as

John Routledge told me, "Your title isn't clear, Selena. Some woman wrote
to the authorities, saving that your Uncle Isajah's death was murder!"

Weakly I said, "Then the plantation isn't mine, is it?"

"We both know it is, Miss Danley. De facto it's yours,
de fore it isn't. You understand those terms?"

Nodding, I said, "Do you recollect the name of the woman who told the officials" John toosched forefinger to temple, ran it down his heavy brown side-whiskers. Then he spread his hands sparr and shook his head. "Something with an 'o,' I think." "Was it Odle?" I said, recalling the girl Clotilde-Marie

had told me about, Ton-ton Baze's daughter.
John shrugged. "It might be," he said. "Odile?
Maybe."
After leaving John I sought out Cletilde-Marie.
"This burgen, Ton-ton Baze," I said, "does he stay in

"This bonges, Ton-ton Baze," I said, "does he stay in on place or does he ravel around a loo?"
Clocild-Marie cocked her head.
"His calle, where he lives, is in the hills," she said, pointing. "Maybe five, six miles away. He mostly stays

there size the humfe, how would you say?—the sanctiary. Why you want to know that?—The sanctiary. Why you want to know that?—The sanctifice of the sanctification of the sanctification of the sanctification of the half-doesn nice, fat chickens, the fastest you can find, you then in a cage, and get them to Those-ton faster ITs find the chickens are a gift from me because I respect his him on the behatafon—be can choose the share. And ITI

pay whatever price he sees."

alare in 'Merica. Then the los, the mysteres; they took ime, she was dead—the Grarfe took in, the lords of the dead. Beron Samedi, Baron Chemeiere, Ramasseur-de-Croix who collects the crosses, they took me, and Guede-lonyve, as at me over the fire, his expression appearing to change with the shadows that or zerow and farmat serous has face.

"You killed my uncle!" I saw it with an oppressive the contraction of the contraction o

asked great Damballa-Wedo to give me vengesinée en the voil man, to give me justice. But great Damballa, he say, 'I will act, Ton-ton Baze, when the time is ready, when the stars are right, when the spirits call for his blood, then I will act.' So I did not do the sacrifice, and I did nake the gris-gris." It tooks while for me to absorb this information.

It took a while for me to absorb this information.
"Then how . . . "I began.
"Une cutes.—you call her fer-de-lence, snake she live
in case brake.—maybe one day she see Issiah, then great

Damballa, scrpent-god, he say, 'Now, my lovely, now, my daughter, strike, the time is now!' Then it is over a Too quick!' He snapped his fingers in my face.

All this talk of death and blood and snakes was most unquicting, yet I believed that the essence of what

Ton-ton Baze said—stripped of its mumbo-jumbo—was the truth, unless he was a superb sector. What I found hardest to accept was that my uncle could have behaved so cruelly toward another human being, doing what he



occasions—he had all the rest of the time to live whatever dark and secret life he lived.

I held out my amalet to the hungen.
He nodded gravely, his face showing expression only

by the flickering shadows, "A-h-h," he said. "That is garde I gave to Odile when she was child. It comes from the land where the great stone lions watch the tombs of kings."

kings."
"Here," I said, "it's yours!"
And for that instant I didn't want it, not after what my uncle had done to the girl who wore it first. I pictured the naked upon the auction block, rough fingers prod-ding, lustful eyes greedily devoaring her.
Ton-ton Base aurad unblinking into my face. "Why

would you do this, Selena?"
"Because it's yours—you gave it to her."
He looked from my face to his fire, then back again.
"You keep," he said. "Strong ju-ju, wange of great
power when they wish to kill."
"They?" I said, tremors shooting through my stomach.

I entered the library through a square archway, surprised to find the windows and shutters open, and John Routledge buys with papers as a leather-covered cabriole John pushed his papers saide, casting a knowing glance my way.

"Would you care to hazard a guess where the money

"Would you care to hazard a guess where the money came from for Issiah to buy this place, Miss Danhey?" "Oh I know thist," I said. "He was a seaman. He worked up to a captainey." "True. Miss Danley. He was also a slave trader."

"True, Miss Danley, He was also a slave trader."

In Ton-ron Base had been right about Odile. She had been used up, as he'd told me, then sold! But what struck me as even worse was the callous way in which my uncle must have got rid of the poor gitl, including her in one of his regular shipments like a butcher adding

her in one of his regular shipments like a butcher adding an extra pound of meat to one's order. "How does all this bear upon his death?" I said. "Or does it?"

"I'm not exactly sure," John said with a sigh. "My training in the law makes me ask cui bono?—who benefist? Someone attempting blackmail then killing ham when he wouldn't pay—a freed or escaped slave seeking

retribution-someone who worked on the plantation?-I just don't know. It might have been just what we thought it was, an accident."

Sangloire had saddled a chesmut more for me, a bay for himself. We rode for a while through short, scrubby brush, the sun low in the west, In a shady elen we stooped, dismounted, and Sangloiro

led me under a green archway of tall, frilly tree-ferns to a crude wooden bridge-actually just two worn plankswhich forded a narrow stream of gently gurgling water. He pointed to a gray stone chimney, all that remained of a house that had burned long ago, Sangloire took me by

the arm. "I wanted to share this lovely place with you, Mademoiselle Selena. Sometimes I come here alone, when my duties permit, just to sit and think about things. They say that sixty years ago the great black liberator, Toussaint L'Ouverture, stoeged right here to help recruit the army that drove out my pig-headed countrymen from Saint

Domingoel" But of course! And a few years later Santa Teresa had done the same, at a heavy cost in blood, and proclaimed itself a republic. I remembered Dr. Gaspard-Desor's lec-

"Many times I ask myself what it is you might be thinking, mademoiselle, when you see me watching

"I'm probably hungry," I said, "and thinking about food!" "No, no, no, your American humor is out of place!"

Ton-ton Base urgently wanted to see me that ni urgently that I wasn't even to bring gifts! Jean-Baptiste promised to meet me at the stables and drive me so the

At the appointed hour I left the manor house, A big. high moon suffused the landscape with soft yellow light, splashing the ground with gilded puddles through the trees, painted leaves, branches, with a pale golden sheen. On my way to the stables I met Etienne Sangloire leading two horses.
"I told Jean-Baptiste I had better take you," he said.

"He did not require much convincing." By the rime we arrived at the thatched caille I suppose

I had exhausted an infinity of conjecture so that my mind, far from collected, was worn to a frazzle. Sangloire reined his horse but made no move to dis-

mount. "I shall be right here if you need me," he said I hesitated just inside the entrance to accustom my eves to the blackness, for within the caille nothing could be seen. My nerves started to prickle at the eerie silence. Then my shoe struck something softly yielding. I

"All right, mademoiselle?" I heard outside.

Sangloire rushed through the entrance with a lantern, and at last I saw Ton-ton Baze. He lay on his back on the dirt floor, silent, unmoving, his pitifully thin arms outspread. Sangloire bent over the bungaw's tiny body, held the lantern close. I saw with horror that Ton-ton Baze's eves were wide open, that two red welts, like small boils, swelled on his throat. Sangloire put his ear to the hunour's cliest, held it there, then arose, shaking his head.

When I entered the dark hut again, I found Ton-ton Baze's body. He'd been killed by the deadly fer-de-lance. Beside him, a doll with snake fangs in it!

Well, I knew that "Mademoiselle, do you find thirty-three years an intolerable age?" "It depends upon how well you bear it, M'sieu Sangloire." "Etienne, she will not listen," he said, shaking his head

sadly, "She simply will not listen!" He stood in front of me, both hands lightly on my shoulders, his large, dark eves intensely luminous, questioning. Then he drew me to him, and a confusion of emotions began to course and pound through my being, such as I had never felt before. But a yearning was there, and a wanting, and a need to be held and caressed, and to hear soft, soothing words.

I lifted my face to his, waiting, holding my breath. He kissed me then on the forehead, as one would a child! We separated, lingered a few minutes in the fading light, neither of us speaking.

Somewhere crickets chirped, a frog croaked, the stream

bubbled over rounded pebbles. Then remounting, we rode back toward the manor house, the green-gold gone from the day, replaced by shadows, Sangloire, I realized, remained the embodiment of his family name, and was still running away-the fool, the fool, the lovely, frightened, beautiful, dark-haired

Jean-Baptiste Plesy, his handsome features agitated, found me later in the day, told me breathlessly that

"There was no love lost between us, as you know, Mademoiselle Selens. And the world is probably better off-still, it is a bad way to go, betten by a fer-de-lance!" Against Erienne's strenuous objections, I made him tie Ton-ton Baze's childlike body across the back of my horse, while I rode on his, my arms clutched around his slender waist for all I was worth. I felt it my duty to see

that the bungen was given a decent burisl by his own followers at the plantation, of whom I suspected there were many. Poor old man! Neither his gods nor his ju-ju nor the signs in the blood had saved him from the final evil that had overtaken him in darkness, an evil I alone had seen

evidenced in the feeble edge of the light from Etjenne's lintern in the caille-a small, black doll with two fangs stuck in its throat.

It might have been three o'clock in the morning when I woke up suddenly. Cold, damp air blew through the open jalousie-I slid

from the warmth of my blankets and went to shut it. Thick swirls of fog billowed in off the sea, assumed fancied shapes and forms I left off dwelling upon when their bizarre nature became evident. But I couldn't return to sleep. A thought nagged and tugged at my consciousness like a puppy worrying a bone. Might there not be concested on Ton-ton Baze's person some clue as to why he wanted to see me?

Without lighting my bedside candle I went quietly to

the armoire, felt around for my heavy wool closk, draped it over my shoulders, laced my shoes, and tiptoed downstairs to the pantry, where I knew there was a lan-

"Now Selena," I told myself, "why don't you just grow up and do what you came to do?" Yet still I delayed; the prospect of fishing ground in the pockets of the dead hungari's sleeveless coat was not one to fill me with joyous anticipation. The lantern proved more efficient inside the stables than out. The

place where I recalled he'd been left was empty. The body was gone! I had to satisfy myself with another tour of the stable before giving the whole thing up as a lost cause. The fog had lifted to some degree when I left the stables; the lantern no longer dazzled my eyes, and I could just make out the looming bulk of the manor house perhaps two hundred yards ahead. With many a halt and backward glance, and my ears strangely alert, I started toward the house. I had gone about a third of the way when I funcied I heard someone faintly call my name. What's this? I thought. Had John wakened, found me gone? I

stopped, looked around. I saw nothing but drifts of wispy fog, and bersted myself for falling victim to an overwrought mind. I resumed my course, Once more I heard my name. Turning toward the source, I witnessed a shape coalesce out of the fog and the blue, pulsing light. I stood stock still, apprehensive yet awe-stricken, unable to move. The shape assumed the ghostly semblance of a man in a flowing robe. It raised an coming. Look." She turned me around. And she was right. All that could be seen, from doorway to stables, were thin trails of for adrift in the early morning breeze.

Three days possed without any sign of the police John Routledge had told me he'd sent for.

If the police were not coming I'd have to take action myself; anything was better than interminable waiting even if it might be only the exploration of another blind alley. I considered who, among the people I knew, might have had reason to do away with Ton-ton Baze, From

this there emerged two names. The first was Erienne Sangloire! That the beworm and Exenne hated each other needed no additional corroboration than my remembrance of the flogging incident. And Erienne had admirted to throwing him off the properry twice. Yet the idea of Erienne's association in the slaving seemed preposterous even to my newly doubtful

frame of mind; his offer of friendship and his subsequent actions bore the stamp of the genuine, and I dismissed him from my private inquiry. The other person was not as easily cleared. He was the big fellow, Antoine, who'd done the flogging and come wheedling to me for a job as Etienne's assistant

Then I went to Clotilde-Marie-if she couldn't shed light on the doings of everybody working at the plantation no one could "What do you know about Antoine, who used to do the whipping?" I said.

I went to the stable where we'd brought Ton-ton Baze, to search for some clue to the mystery of his death, and my own terror. The body was gone!

"Se-I-e-e-e-na! I am Issiah!"

arm and beckoned.

vanished.

Against all judgment and reason; yes, against my will. I found myself moving slowly toward the beckoning figure. Step by step I drew closer until, lifting my lantern. I could see its face. And it was the face of my Uncle Isaiah! But a face transformed, lined, rutted, gouged by unimaginable agony, by all the pain and the torments of hell! Drained and bloodless, it bore the mark and the pallor of death. Its mouth formed a ghastly parody of a smile; from its tight, cracked lips dripped spittle; its dead eyes fixed me with a filiny stare. I wanted to scream, but couldn't get one past my throat. I wanted to run, but found myself frozen where I stood. Even the blessedness of fainting was denied me. The apparition reached slowly behind its back. And in the instant that I smelled the same sharp-scented spirits I recognized from my abduction in Boston, the spell broke and my lethargy

With all my strength I hurled my lantern at the crea-"Open the stupid door!" I shouted. "Wake up, for then bolted! God's sake!"

The creature wasn't fifty yards away when I heard the orious click of the latch, and the door swang wide, Clotilde-Marie stood there in a nightgown, her face creased from sleep. I threw myself at her, flung my arms

around her neck. 'It's coming, it's coming!" I sobbed, "Shut the door! "Child, what you do out there?" she said. "Nothing Disgust warped Clotilde-Marie's broad, pock-marked

"Antoine Jarat, you mean? I know the man. His sister, Sor Antoinette-vou have seen her, Mistress, she is very tall and thin-she works for me, usually in the kitchen, She is all right, maybe a little strange"-Clotilde-Marie touched her temple-"but her brother? I disfike him from the start! He was always with that troublemaker Julien Darag, until your uncle Isaiah had big fight and threw him out! Then that gree cochen Antoine, he come whining around your uncle like a kicked dog and denounce his friend Darsq, so your uncle let him stay."

My burgeoning pretensions to master detection received a setback later in the morning, but it was a setback that I welcomed with relief. John Routledge led a man into the library, beckoned me to follow. I recognized the tall, bald Negro immediately as Lieutenant Jacques Carre, whom I'd first met briefly as I was leaving the Gaspard-Desor's in Can Therese. He had warned me not to travel by night.

Supper in the dining room, with its great crystal chandelier causing pale, rainbow prisms to dance over the white lace tablecloth, was not the culinary triumph it might have been. Etjenne and John made light conversation, joked about some of the questions repeatedly put to them by Lieutenant Carre and the other police,

Though I had not tasted the wine John and Etienne had made considerable use of, I was becoming light-



headed. At the same time a quessiness began in my stomach. This changed quickly to a sharp pai I got up unsteadily from the table. "I'm sick-I feel The last thing I remember was John or Etienne

shouting, "Get her, quick! She's falling! "Mistress, lie back-vou must rest!" Why was Glotilde-Marie trying to stop me? I had reached for the curved pinespple finial on top of my bed-

post to save me, when I perceived that I was already saved, miraculously alive and undrowned, and in my "Child, you stand this plantation on its head for two

days!" said Cloulde-Marie She tucked a blanket under my chin, ran her hand through my hair in a motherly way. "M'sieu Routledge is up here every hour asking about you," she said. "And when it isn't him it's Sangtoure. He kiss you, Mistress, but you don't know that?"

I recollected the supper, the bitterness of my food, my iddiness. "What did I eat?" Clotilde-Marie took a glass from the candlestand, held it to my lips. It tasted bitter and furry. "No. no. no. drink all of it." she said. "It brought you

When I finished the stuff she replaced the glass on the candlestand. "One time I warned you about apole from manchined

tree-but it wasn't your fault, Mistress. That crazy girl, Sor Antoinette Jarat, she must have poisoned you, be"Se-l-e-e-na! I am Isajah!" the ghostly figure called. I forced myself to look at it. The face was my uncle'sbloodless, distorted, ghastly!"

cause she is gone! Even now those gros cochons that are like police look for her, but she comes to same end as her brother, I think."

"What happened to Antoine Jarat?" I said, remem-

bering I'd wanted to question him "They found him while you were sick and feverish, Mistress. You are sure you are feeling better?"
"I'm a bit weak, but I'm all right. What happened?"

"Yesterday they brought back his body. He is bester to death. That is the way Julien Daraq pays for friend-

Not much later John Routledge came quietly into my chamber. When he saw I was awake he broke out into a

"Selena! Good God, you gave us a start!" John leaned close, tears forming in his eyes. He kissed

my cheek, then his lips found mine and he kissed me firmly but sweetly, sweetly, and I pulled him close and held him tight-wanting him, needing him, yet afraid of "I love you. Selenal I went you to marry me!"

His line were close to my ear, his words sent a delectable shiver through me, but gently I pushed him away. "I want you to tell me that later," I said, "when I'm

sure you're not just sorry for me." When Clotide-Marie came to begin her long-promised Creole lessons, catrying warm milk and a glass of her furry-tasting medicine, she found me quietly crying.

After sundown, Erienne Sangloire, whom I hadn't seen since my fateful supper three nights ago, peered through my half-opened door, then stepped inside, resplendent in fresh clothing he'd obviously put on after work. His white ruffled linen shirt was motless, his black boots so highly polished they looked wer, his light blue trousers nearly pressed and cressed. Even his black hair, normally tumbling in ringlets over his forehead, was carefully combed in place.

"So," he said, "Sleeping Benury, having survived the malevolence of our bucolic Borgia, returns unto the land of the living There was no question about it, the man had a eift for ruining first impressions?

"Well, aren't you the joyous one over my near demise," I said. I have done it again," Erienne said, slapping his fore-

head. "I hoped to cheer you, and I have made you angry

"I have wanted you from the moment you came!" Etienne declared passionately, "We must be together!" How could I tell him I loved John Routledge?

instead. I always want to say the right things to you Selens, and I always say the wrong ones! Why do you

"I suspect it's your direction. But I don't always convey my meaning to you, either," I said, releating somewhat in the face of his embarrassment. How exactly like him to have kissed me while I was fevered, and to put me

his arrests and get the devil out!" Etienne said, "His sound and their interminable, studid questions-they ruin my production schedules! I am halfway ready to confess, just so work can get on!"

"Etienne, what are your feelings about the things that are happening?"
"Selena, I think Julien Darsq is stronger now than he

has ever been, and I think he means to get back at Plantation Danley for all he imseines your uncle did to him. I want you to go away to the capital until he is brought to Lord!-the two of them, Etienne and John, were con-

spiring to get me away! "I cannot leave my duties just yet," Etienne said, "but when we cut off to the ground this noxious plant that is growing, then I will come and be with you

"You'll come and be with me." I repeated flatly "You do not understand me?" He threw up his arms. "Sweet, suffering Jesus! I have wanted you from the moment you came! I have never known a girl like you-accomplished, intelligent, beautiful-the combination is devastating! What do you want me to say? That I need

you? I do! That I love you? You know I do! Sciena, we must be morether "This is a period of great trial for me," I said, taking

his hand. "I need your strength, your clear mind, and your friendship as never before Ezienne looked away, "You will not come,"

"I can't, It has nothing to do with you. Or your offer." *Very well, it was genebe of me to approach you so bluntly," he said. "But if you will not let me come with you, then go alone to Cap Therese, Selena! I do not like And I say this as your overseer, your friend, and as a man who loves you."

Etienne slid back his chair, "Finish your breakfast, Selena." He strode from the kitchen, went down the hall to the front of the house. In a moment he came champing

"We are honored with visitors, Selena," he said. "Hip-



polyte Labroussier comes from his plantation in his grand coach-and-four to impress you, and brings his sobeautiful, so-supereilious daughter, Hermione "Show them to the drawing room," I said. "Till be down in a minute." I dashed upstairs to dress

Labrousser pere struppled to his feet. He was not above five feet tall, almost as wide, practically bald save for a curlicue of dark hair Napoleonically plastered to his forehead. A heavy onld watch chain bisected his considerable middle. I imagined him the mayor of some sleepy French village, famed for its cheeses! I accepted his pudgy hand.

"Hippolyte Labroussier, mam'selle," he said in French. "I meant to visit you sooner, but the pressure of affairs . . " He shrugged. "And this is my lovely daughter, Hermione."

Labroussier fille got up languidly. She was not over twenty, and strikingly beautifull Her large, violet eves, accented by the violet redingote and matching bonnet she wore, looked out beneath absolutely durling dark hrows. Her small mouth was red, pouting, and her nose, turned up beguilingly, was exquisitely formed. She offered her hand, gracelessly failing to remove her glove, and it occurred to me her face was as perfect and delicate as a Meissen figurine's, but not as expressive. "I am charmed, Mademoiselle Labroussier," I said.

The indolence of the hot, late afternoon saw lobs Routledge back from Cap Therese, bearing with him my

old friend, Dr. Paul Gaspard-Desor, "Selena, I saw the letter," John said, pulling op a chair. "The letter," I repeated. "For God's sake, the letter that said Isaiah was murdered! Fine script, good hand, signed 'Odile Froissart, whoever the devil she is! No post-mark-it was delivered

by hand. Naturally, no one recalls who brought it. They wouldn't show it to me the last time." Odile Froittert? But the would scarcely sign it "Baze. I clamped my mind tight, before another round robin of pointless speculation ensued.

As I passed the library early that evening, John called to me. He left scattered piles of paper on his desk, placed his arms on my shoulders, tried to kiss me, but I ducked. "Hermione asked after you. Counselor," I said sweetly. "A-b-h, ther's where it itches! I knew something was biting you the minute I got back, I knew it! Am I supposed to apologize because she asked after me? I'm not John cast his eyes heavenward and righed.

There was this Persian who said, Unto him who on-

gathering honey from Hermiooel

its uncharacteristic grace and kindled my curiosity to an uncomfortable degree. "Oh, Mademoiselle Selena, it was horrible, just horri-

guns, Darag has them, every one!"

ble!" she said. She betook herself to a chair in a corner into which she collapsed, her face in her hands, and stared vacantly at the floor,

"You were attacked, then?" I said. "Trescherously set upon by Julien Darac's murderous riffraff, mam'selle. The canaller waited until a wind arose, then they torched my fields, set afire my house, broke in, slaughtered four of my mulattos, and would have killed my poor daughter and me after forcing me to watch the most bestial-sh, no matter, no matter. But a hastily snatched revolver made them think twice, and we escaped by coach, I shot two, three, I do not know! And of all nev people, old Plesy here, was the only one who came with me. A-h-h, my fields!—my house which I huilt while Hermione's mother lived!—all is gone, rubble, burned to the ground! And my beautiful, lovely

In the late afternoon, following a day of much disc etude and perturbation, I was idling about behind the manor house near the slowly flowing stream along whose banks our laundresses were wont to perform their function. The fires were long since out; the oval copper wash tubs stood onused and somehow desolate; no linear draped the banks or fluttered flag-like from lines; and the scene, so noisy with laughing chatter during washday and now so silent, impressed itself, concordant with my feelings, as one of loneliness and despair. Some motion

John tried to kiss me, but I ducked. "Hermione was asking for you, Counselor," I said sweetly. She was beautiful . . . did John really love her?

ette Jarat!

derstandeth a woman will I grant half my kingdom.' I don't recall him having any takers. Selena, there's absolutely nothing between Hermione and me!"

"But there was, wasn't there?" "I'll not deny it! But it's been long over. I only see her for old time's sake, and because, by God, it's nice to talk to a woman once in a while who doesn't talk back!" Rain continued throughout the night. It was hard and driving when I awoke next morning to a tarnished sky and moddy grounds.

Then there was a knock at the front door that sounded as if it could have thrown it from its hinges, "Assassins!" I heard Clotilde-Marie cry. "Forbear to batter down the walls! I come!" Another horrendous thump followed. Etienne and I

sped in perplexity at one another. Then heavy footsteps hurried down the hall, and Clotilde-Marie burst into the "The Labroussier menage arrive, more drowned than not!" she said. "The fat one, Hippolyte, looks more ridic-

ulous then ever!" Shortly Labroussier pere et fille arrived, followed at a respectful distance by old Plesy, Jean-Baptiste's stepfather. Their clothing was plastered to their backs, dark from drenching; the Labroussiers dripped water and exuded gloom. Hermione managed a wan smile, almost spologetic. She stepped up to me, embraced me, touched her cheek to mine, in a gesture that both surprised me by

drew my attention to the stream. Moving along with the sluggish current, an object bumped against the bank, swung out again, bumped once more, then stopped. Curious, I drew nearer. The object, lengthier than I had at first supposed, began to take shape. Then seized with

horror, I perceived it to be the body of a drowned black Who was she, that had come to this tracic end? Averting my face. I approached, bent down to grasp her limbs, and by dint of great effort pulled her from the stream. One glance at her face was all I permitted myself; one was all I needed. Before me lay my poisoner, Sor Antoin-

Abstractedly I went to the tall, satinwood armoire to dress for supper. Clotilde-Marie had always seen to it that fresh linen by neatly folded on the annoire's bottom shelf, in readiness for daily changes as befitted a sugar baronness, or whatever she considered me. Nor had she been remiss this time; the linen, clean and white, occupied its accustomed place. But on top of that linen a snake was coiled! I started, shrieked, jumped backward. The snake lifted an angular, lance-tip head a few inches, showing a yellowish throat, while a shiny black

forked tongue darted from its mouth. Cold and terrible unblinking eyes looked into mine, and recalling a childhood story of how serpents mesmerize their intended orey. I tore my eyes away and fixed them on its body. Reddish-brown it was, overlayed with faded black cross-



The snake lifted its head, fixing cold, terrible eyes on me. I knew it was the accursed fer-de-lance—instant, agonizing death, close at hand!

marks, and at its tall was a kind of bony spike. Never had I seen one like it, but from deep within me I somehow knew what it was: the remonestess, accurated for de-larace, agenc of my unde'd death, and Ton-ton-Bazet's This was no grit-grit doll like I goe aboard the sipp. "Ital Laberte," with fangs in its succeiv tenteded to frighter, nor a black with fangs in its succeiv tenteded to frighter, nor a black candle meant to kell from fair. This was death at close hand, instant, agonating death necompassed is a body not five feet fong!

Once, when I was little. Unde Isaish had taken me to Once, when I was little. Unde Isaish had taken me to

Mr. Barnum's circus. I'd watched in wide-eyed fascination a Hindu snake charmer keep a cobra saway to a tune played on a kind of bubloos flue. I'd commented on the man's bravery, and Uncle Isaiah had laughed.

"Look to the instrument's motion, little princess," he'd said, "Sight hey have to a fine degree, but they havely.

the faculty to hear."
During a halt in the viper's forward progress I castiously reached behind my neck and pulled the amules' chain over my head, not taking my eyes for a moment from my relentless pursuer, It had to work! Holding the chain in one hand, I used my other to lower the medalion carefully. Then I slowly started it owinging like a

The state had for the present ceased flowing toward ms, and now lifting in lance-haped back plegas rawaying in in rhythm with the oscillating object that conformed is, feeping in so, focused, it seemed to ms, ever on the did not purpose to larm. I halled the atteits and claim in my hand, there is, that at the fire-de-leaved In a motion too fast or follow, the viper struck the atteits and claim in line place along the metal-hard is was the door, wrenched it open, and in the instant; I shumsed it behind not all thought I heard in south facilities.

I overtook John Routledge on the stales.
"You'll not sleep in the library, then, Selena?"
"Fve thought it over. I guess my chamber is safe enough. And you're tight down the hall."

enough. And you're tight down the hall."

What if they came back tooights?

What if they came back tooights?

Waiting until the house grew quiet, I cracked open the door and peeped out. The hanging hall lamp had been dimmed, all within my view was sleent; for the first time Ecience warn's enoughing in a chair in the hallway. I went back to my bed, strized my gilliows in a sudden whim and

arranged them in the shape of a shambering body, then covered them with a blanket. I took a second blanket with me as I stole down to the library, feeling quite conspiratorial and as excited as a litric gril permitted to sleep for the first time as ther friend's house! And skeep I did, for perhaps three hours. Then I heard a crash appraisin, and the loud reports of gundre. Three

a crash upstairs, and the loud reports of gunfire. Three shoes came in quick succession; there followed a pause, then two more shoes!

"Come back, goddamn you!" I heard.

"Come back, goddamn you!" I heard.
John's voice!
I rushed upstairs as the Labroussiers and Dr. Gaspard.

Deter-popped out of their chambers. My door stood open, I dashed into a room thickly switting with the serid presence of guarantee, John Reutledge, have to his waist, leaned out from the wreckage of the plousie, white smoke still issuing from his revolver.

"God, you were tight, Sciences" hothing like a woman's

intuition! He came up a pole to your window, the same man I think I set to Labroussier's a few weeks ago-close-cropped hair, those big carriags—I only had a chance for two short, and he got clean away! Selena, if you want a scare, look as you bed!"

I did so. Where my head would have lain were three black-singed holes fired by my assailant, Mr. Earringsl He'd followed me from Boston to the plantation.

I had arisen earlier than my usual wont with the object of avoiding John Routledge in the kitchen; fitful, tossing sleep following the attempted assassination had augmented rather than reduced my suspicions, and I had rehearsed a thousand thoes what John would have termed a purely circumstantial case: -That he could easily have arranged my kidnapping

in Boston until the only available ship should have sailed. -That the impasse with the Santa Teresan government over transferring the plantation could have been an iovention of his own, as could the mysterious 'Odile Froissirt'-Froissart, Dr. Gaspard-Desor at length remembered, being the oams of a fourteenth century

chronicler -That John oced not have represented anyone other than himself in a scheme to chear me of my inheritance. -And finally, that his offer of marriage might have been his way of insuring control of the plantation, should

his other plots and devices fail With such doubts as these, and in the perturbation of

mind that they carried with them. I greatly wished not to see his person, at least not so close upon last outh's events. In what manner could I address this man? "Take all, it's yours, but let me live?" For similar reasons, I desired not to confront Enenne Sangloire, either. It was with a sense of relief, then, that I found the kitchen occopied only by old Plesy "Julien Darag is an our fields, mad'moiselle. I hear had.

bad things. Your pardon, mad'moiselle, but this is what I hear-you are to be nunished because you caused the lolling of the buyers Ton-ton Base and the largers.

brother and sister!"

brightened my office, and I remarked upon your determination and your spirit. I tell you truly, I was captivated! But later, when I told you all was over between Herminne and me, I spoke more a wish than a fact! When I'm around her I can think of no one else! Now she's alone, through my damnable dereliction, and I ask you to release me from my pledge." John lowered his

"You must consider your nature, Joho," I said softly "You must recall the circumstances under which you declared yourself to me-I was sick, weak, and near death, as dependent, I guess, as Hermione Lahroussier, I cannot hold against you that you follow your nature

But why did you wait until now to tell me this?" He looked up briefly, turned his eyes away again. "Because, um, because . . . "Because we might not have another chance?" I said.

Exicuse Sangloire smiled diffidently, lightly squeezed my hand. "I require your authority, Sciena, to take

charge during this emergency." "Was that ever in question?" I said. "Why, you have it.

He cleared his throat, then spoke up forcefully.

"My friends, attend, please! I wish to obtain your assent to certain measures I propose for your safety. No one is to venture our into the clearing unless he is accom-panied by an armed man-that will be myself, M'sieu Routledge, Lieuteoane Carre's four policeosen, or the

twelve men of my crew for whom we have some "Now Selena and Hermione"-he raised his voice-"and you, too, Clotilde-Marie, will receive instruction in

John confessed he loved Hermione, "Why did you wait until now to tell me this?" I asked softly, "Because you're afraid we won't have another chance?"

Under a hot, high, midday sun John Routledge reined loading and cleaning the moskets before you retire toup a blown and lathered horse as I watched the preparanight. We have guppowder, builets, and if Darsq strikes, tions for our defense from the shelter of the portico. I I am sure we will give a good account of ourselves. would have turned away, but he called to me, and as he

came near I saw his face was streaked with dut and perspiration. "I am a fool, and worse, a coward, Scienal I should

"How a fool, John?" There was a kind of pleading to his urgency; be not

harsh in judging me, he seemed to say, "Hippolyte suggested we reconnoiter his place. I offered no objections, thought it would prove a lark, in fact! Now he's dead, Seleon!

"Dead? How?" "That murderous soum fired from the grass-we never even saw them until too late! And I holted, run for it. while they hacked his remains to pieces!"

John seated himself in Extenne's chair. I started to rise, but his hand lightly arrested me.

"Selens, wait a minute, please! I must speak with you. It isn't easy for me." I sat back, folded my hands on my lan.

"Three years ago I fell in love with Hermione Labroussier. For a time our love prospered hissfully, but she became moody, irritable, yet withal clinging and most possessive. I began to feel . . . smothered, can you understand -- and I broke it off. And for three years I courted no one else, no one! Then one day your beauty

Darag's carts stopped at our wagoos. Unsern hands dumped their smoking, flaming contents into ours, loosed the oxen, bellowing with fright, to scurrer in all directions, and shorely our first line of defense was enveloped

in flame, Gunfire erapted from our trenches. "Fire at men, oot smoke!" Ericoge shouted, "Never mind the damned wagons!" I heard someone cry out behind the house, "Sangloire!

They're in the stream?" "Plesy, hold fast up there!" Frience exclaimed "A Perriere, mes braues?"

As our men rushed into position they opened fire on the attackers still in midstream. Others slashed with machetes at the men just emerging from the water. Men jumped at each other, thrust glistroing blades, hacked, parried, swung great, arcing blows from high overhead.

Screams of rage and agony rose above the din of drums and the yells of the Deraquires along the far bank who were firing at our men. Tales of Indian massacre I'd heard as a child faded to insignificance—this was real, this was now; it was hideous

butchery, but the men were magnificent! No wooder that even against the well-armed French their revolution had succeeded!

Both sides took losses, I grew sickened by the sight of

men falling in the mud, yet so compelling is battle, however bloody and close at hand, that I could not turn my unwilling eyes away. Some of our men formed a kind of bucket brigade, tossing discarded weapons from one to another tight up to the door; then I, Hermione, and Clotilde-Marie, put into practice what we'd learned last night, and I was kept too busy to think of anything but cleaning, charging, and priming hot-barreled muskets and rifles. No soonet were they readed than they returned to service. John Routledge's revolver, odorous with burned powder and scorched grease, must have passed through my hands se least four times! It was near-ing poon when the need for our help slackened. The sounds of firing and the shouts of battle died away. Wesrily. I went over to the door, leaned against the jamb. "If he gers what he wants he'll go away," I said,

"If he gets what he wants?" John said.

Both Etienne and John were startled "Oh. no!" Erienne said, "Absolutely not! Out of the

question!" Shortly after sundown Daraq's drums began to beat, nor in the hills but in our very fields. My journey, then, would not be over-long-or perhaps it would prove the

longest I'd ever undertaken. I visited out wounded, gave them such comfort as I could-there were over seventy left; Dr. Gaspard-Desot, despite heroic effort, had been unable to save twelve, That visit only strengthened my resolve. I then went to

were spilling from the house like ants from a flooded anthill, dashing in all directions but the right one, calling after me. Crouching, I made my way to the end of the trench, where, by the aid of a burned stump of wagonshaft, I pulled myself out and headed toward the trees, toward my destiny, toward Darsq's throbbing drams-Selena Catherine Danley, eighteen-year-old maniac and

They call that dram Assoro, or sometimes Sorer, which, by virtue of its large diameter and great height, is distinguishable from all the lesser drums in a betteric. Inspired with its own los, it is itself an object of veneration.

I picked out Julien Darsq sitting cross-legged on the ground, his horribly scarred face in a gruescome parody of a smile, as bottles of clairin, a low-grade white rum of the country, passed from hand to hand. Etienne Songloire, I was certain, would have taken no delight in the securacy of his estimate of their number; it seemed to me that or least six hundred men immed the clearing, many of them bruised and wounded, but laughing, shouting and caronsing. How dissimilar had been Ton-ton Baze's

bule-zin, with its throngs of gentlefolk-men and women -and its overwhelming aspect of devotion tinged with sorrow! The Armen dram now commenced a slow, deliberate and reverberating beat, which I felt all through my body as well as heard. The smaller drams beat a faster accom-

paniment. The crowd nearest Daraq parted and grew quiet: a figure marched through them, his outstretched

"Help! Fire!" I shouted. In the confusion, I escaped from the room. "Stop her!" called Etienne, too late. I was on my way to the enemy's camp. my bedchambet where I lit the oil lamp and turned up

the wick until the flame smoked, darkening the chimney. I blew it out, waited until the chimney cooled, then daubed lampblack over my face and hands-I hoped not to pass close inspection, but perhaps in darkness I could get through sentries, ours or theirs. In an agony of doubts and fancies I waited as the house grew silent, making the drums seem louder by comparison. Then, drawing on a dark cloak, I approached my door. The stupid knob held fast! I jiggled it, shook it. "Go to sleep, Selena," Etienne called from the hall, "I

value much your sentiment, but your life mote! Goodnight!" I crumpled a bed sheet, tossed it in a comet. After lighting the candle I blew out the lamp, and unscrewing its brass burner from the fount, poured lamp oil on the

sheet, which I then set ablaze with the candle "Fire!" I shouted, banging on my door, "Help! Fire!" Steps pounded up the stairs. I readied myself. Etienne burst through the door, snatched blankets from my bed and leaged toward the configuration. I was through that door in a trice and halfway down the stairs before I

heard him call my name! In another instant I gained the kirchen, and scurried our behind the house as lights came "We must stop her!" I heard Etienne shout. "She's lost her reason, she's spicidal!" Juhn replied,

"No. she is just Selena!" Frienne shouted back. As they ran out the front of the house with lanterns, I dropped into one of Etienne's trenches. By now servants arms bearing a cuttass by its handle and the tip of its broad blade. That man was Mr. Earrings of evil memory! The crowd cheered in a manner that made my blood run cold, waved machetes and rifles overhead, Mr. Earrings gestured them to silence. He matched his words to the slow booming of the great drum.

"Two lives . . . we offer you . . . tonight . . . so that tomorrow . . . victory, and all their lives . . . will be ours!" The crowd shouted approval, fired guns into the air.

In ever-mounting horror, yet fascinated withal, I beheld him pour rum into a basin, set it ablaze at one of the

fires, then calmly dip his hands into it and lave his arms with the flaming liquid! Two men came forward, carrying the bound little boy to him. The child, even though apparently drugged, uttered a pitcous moan. Mr. Earrings held up a small knife, and offering it to front, rear, and each side-the four corners, the four windsturned to face the child. The drum-best quickened. Only then did I find my voice, "No!" I screamed, and leaped into the clearing!

"Aveda-Wedo rells her sons they are studid and misled! They must with their machetes harvest crops, hot lived The soil which feeds their children is fed with blood instead! Shall your children feed on blood

"How many died today at Plantation Danley to feed Darso? They lie beyond the burned wagons and along the banks of a stream, and not one of them cares whether the Danley woman or Julien Darso sleeps in the greathouse tonight! You are stupid and misled, I am AvedaWedo, bride of Damballa, and I say it." "Underneath your sweat, your blackness leaves you, Miss Danley!" said Mr. Earrings in perfect English. It was wrong-it didn't fit. Hadn't he spoken to me in Bos-

ton in a heavy accent? I knew not what to think The giant form of Julien Daraq strode toward us, his muscles rippling, in his hand a muchete. Mr. Eatrings pulled a pistol from his pantaloons, similar to, hut shorter-barteled, than John Routledge's, and leveled it at

Darag. Darag halted, glaring. "The plantation is yours to do with what you wish," Mr. Earrings said to him, "but the Danley woman is

"Danley woman?" Darag stared wildly at my face, "Her uncle gave me this!" He touched spread fingers to his horrid scar. "That's very sad indeed," said Mr. Earrings, "but after

all my years of planning, the last Dunley stands before me, came of her own will at that!" He laughed in a h-pitched, hysterical way, "Hungan, you tricked met" eried Darsq. "And you, Danley, you would have died that night, but I saw your

"Ah, you've met?" said Mr. Earrings, "Then I won't have to introduce you!" He laughed madly. "I know you mean to kill me," I said, "but before you

do, may I he told why?"

"It will give me pleasure to watch yout face," said Mr. Earrings, "So. You die hecouse I swore that the Danley name must perish. I loved the girl Odile, who Isaish ruined and sold to slavery. Four months after we'd met in New Orleans she died of consumption, coughing blood!" The face of Mr. Earrings twetched. "When, after

studying Isash's affairs for years and following him," he revessed. "I encountered someone else who wished him dead, to profit from his plantarion, his fate was sealed! You should not have escaped the sesman I hired from the ship, La Laberre, in Boston, Sclena Danley, because at that time the other person only wanted you frightened off. I tried all I'd learned as a bungan in New Orleans, although there they call me 'enniure-man.' One night I even impersonated your uncle's nombi! Too bad you do not frighten easily!"

The man could not have said that, had he tight now

"Uncle Isaiah was physically powerful," I said. "How did you overcome him?

Mr. Earrings laughed wildly, "With a substance used only eleven years ago to produce unconsciousness, called ether! And my fer-de-lance, from his long box, finished the work! Ton-ton Baze suffered the same fate, because he would have warned you. My charming pet ought to have likewise kissed you the other night, but your incredible luck prevailed! And then you escaped my shots; how, I do not know!" The towering Julien Daraq had all this time been

switching his eyes between me and Mr. Farrings. In cold fescination I watched a vein throb on his neck

Yet another name I had to hear Mr. Earrings pronounce, although I knew it well. But why had that per-

son pretended to fire at his ecodjutor? "If I'd stayed in Boston," I said, "and failed to assert my claim, the plantation would have gone to John Routledge, wouldn't it?" "The lawyer," Mr. Earrings laughed. "I could let you die thinking that, couldn't I? But I am too kind-hearted, and you saved me trouble coming here tonight! No, Selena Danley, the lawyer Routledge would not have acquired your uncle's property. The plantation would have been Emily's, your uncle's one-time lover-she had a document of partnership."

"Emily?" I said. "Who's Emily?" "Ah, your Boston customs! I should have said Miss

Carstairs, your schoolmistress, Emily Carstairs!" Miss Carsturs! Oh, my God! And I bethought myself of an argument I'd overheard between them once during

a visit from my uncle, an argument over money, "Goodbye, Selena Danley," said Mr. Earrings, "And you, Julien Darag! You're all animals! Animals!" The sear scross Darag's face reddened, the vein in his

neck throbbed. "I am a man!" he screamed, and threw himself at Mr. Earrings!

The wan exploded, the shot struck Darso in the side, and down they both went, rolling and scuffling on the ground. The oun fired again, and Mr. Earrangs scrambled toward the great, silent Assoto drum, Darso was instantly upon him, swung viciously with his machete, slashed through the drum's rope brace. I saw the hope drum torter.

"Look out!" I screamed. I covered my eyes. In an agony of breathless time, a thousand pounds of strongly fashioned wood crashed and splintered on the earth! I could not muze long upon it. The clearing, so shortly filled with roistering, grew silent as the last of the Dereguistes fled into the trees. Silent? Not quite

The two intended child victims had awakened from their drugged sleep, and whimpered. I went over to them and cut through their cords with Mr. Earrings's knife. Wide-eyed, they looked at me, rubbed their bloodless

limbs to life, scampered into the night. I beheld lanterns moving through the brush, and in a moment there came into view forty or fifty blue-coated police bearing prisoners, led by the familiar stringbean gure of Lieutenant Jacques Carre. He'd got through, after all! And typically, too, I mused, not when he'd been needed most with a relief column, but only now, after all was done, leading jailers-a day late, and a dollar

"Selena!" My heart jumped. Etjenne Sangloire rushed forward. swept me up into his arms, kissed me not on my forehead, but full on my lips!

Well All the dammed-up emotion of weeks surged through me. I tingled down to my toes, and I kiesed him back and meant it! We separated, drew apart, fell back again into

one another's arms, dropped to the ground, kissing, got up, kissing! "Your face, Selenal" Etienne said, "You look halfrossted!"

Lord!-the lampblack! "I'm a result Rosbuty passet, Ericane," I said, "The

longer you keep me the better I get!"

"Roybury russer," I said, "It's a kind of potato!" "Ponsto? Sweet, suffering Jesus! Why do we speak of potatoes, you and I?"

STRANGE ECSTASY

PartII

The truth was terrifying, but Lisa had to face it — she was a victim of the same evil plot that had ended her parents' lives in the flaming wreckage of an auto accident! And Nicholas, the man she loved, was involved!

Money couldn't be his reason — was it a primitive passion for her that have no hounds?

B. VIRGINIA WELLS

Lies Lowell and believed that Lord Cecil and Lady Ellen Thornduke were kind family friends who had welcomed her as a guest in their beautiful villa, set high on cliffs overlooking the French Riviera. Then steamer events led her to surrect that, for reasons of their own, they were actually keeping her a prisoner! And a brief escape that led to a meeting with Nicholas Nikonos, a fabulously wealthy shipnine magnate resulted in the devostating realization that instead of the lave be professed for her, he was involved in the ceil plat!

Quickly, I stole from the living room, and thankfully reached my bedroom without waking anyone. For a moment, I learned against the closed door, gasping for breath, trying to cope with this latest blow. Why had the one phone in the villa here disconnected? After all that had

happened that day, I couldn't believe it was an accident. Instinctively, I locked the door—at the same time realizing, even in my confused state, that it wouldn't do any good because arrone would have access to the

I crawled into bed. If anyone came, I could pretend to be asleep. But exhausted as I was, I knew I mustn't sleep. I must think—fast. My life might depend on it.

any time might depend on it.

How had Nicholas Nikonos come
into possession of the principes
central brocking souther had worn
when sike died, juit a few works ago,
in an auto accedest in the Algo! Lord
cettl, who had taken over the interrigation sure
of me that nothing
had been recovered from the burned
work and the company of the
work in because Dad had taken her
on a surrarie britished with to how a

pair of earrings he had discovered, that scomed to match it perfectly. The carrings hadn't been traced, either Jehy had Nicholas given it to me as a casual gift, a token of his remorse (so he said) for having caused me embatrassment when I swam out to his yacht and was mistaken for a whore, brought on beard by his decadent friends for a sex

orgy?

He had seemed so gestle and kind,
so completely sincere when he had
come to dinner that evening to make
his apologues. And afterward, when
we walked in the gardens and he
saved me from certain death when
the edge of the cliff suddenly
crombled hearsth me.

I could still feel the warmth and strength of him as he held me close—and my own tingling response when he kissed me, and declared that he could help me escape, and solve the mystery of my parents' death. How should I react to this dreadful development? Should I confront him or the Thorndykes, or both? No. at might be too dangerous. When I failed in my attempt to phone my father's lower and executor. John Allegby in London, I was sure that something more sinister than a temnorary service breakdown was involved. Especially after the mysterious cave-in of the cliff where I had played safely ever since I was a But I couldn't pretend ignorance, either. The Thorndykes knew Nicholas had eigen me n eift, and they ecoholity knew what it was. Certainly, he did, too I knew what I must do-get out of this place. Run. Get my story to the police authorities But how? The Sence attack does cuarded the sate. into his arms and kissing me passionately!

When he released me at last, he said, his voice trembling, "Oh, Lisa-for the first time in so many, many years, you've made me feel that I have found one woman who wasn't more interested in my money

than in me!" My head was in a whirl. His husky voice, his brooding, dark eyes boring into mine were so compelling-but was he sincere? I felt guilty about my deception, but then, he might be deceiving me. One thing was certain-this man had an overwhelmine physical magnetism, so strong that I had to admit to myself that it

affected me, determined as I was to resist it? I was thankful to see Lady Ellen coming through the trees, followed by Odette, carrying a lunch tray for me For a moment I besitated-had it been poisoned? Hardly, I decided. with a man as prominent as Nicholas on the premises, they wouldn't take a chance. So I ate with relish, sormingly completely absorbed-but at the same time, listening eagerly for any clue that might be dropped in the

conversation between Nicholas and

"We must see that Lisa becomes

Lady Ellen.

strong and well after all her harrowing experiences," Nicholas was saving, and told Lady Ellen how I had become so weak the previous evening that I had dropped his gift in

What a pity," Lady Ellen said, automatically. I was puzzled. Either she and Nicholas had no idea of the true value and meaning of the emerald brooch, or they were the

hest actors I had over seen "I came here this morning," Nicholas went on "honing that I could persuade Lisa to so with me to Nice this afternoon for a movie and

dinner. It might be a pleasant change." A chance to escape! No matter how evil Nicholas' intentions might

be I would be better off than in this honeless prison. As I saw it, there was mally no other choice. If I staved at the Thorndykes' villa, I was in constant danger of being killed. "I'd love to go!" I said quickly

Nicholas beamed, Lady Ellen looked grim, but clearly couldn't defy the powerful Mr. Nikonos. She tried to manage a smile, and even be a bit playful, teasing Nicholas about his reputation as a lady's man, and insisting that he bring me back, no later than eleven.

I rushed upstairs to change. I knew I had only a few minutes before Lady Files would find some excuse to follow me. So first. I checked my funds carefully. Hardly any cash-all my money was tied up pending settlement of my father's estate. Then, I remembered what he'd told me when I chided him about buying Mother and I such expensive lewels "They're better than any other in-

vestment, propriable anywhere Feverishly. I searched through my iewel case. I couldn't wear anything too formal, but the cultured pearls with matching carrings would be right. With a pang, I recalled the happy moment when Mother and Dad gave them to me on my sixteenth birthday. How proud I was! The value didn't impress me half so much as the fact that they were my first, really grownup necklace and

carrings There were other iewels-diamond rings and brooches, a lovely pendant of the finest rade. But I didn't have time to let my thoughts linger on all the other happy occasions when they were given to me. I dressed quickly, stuffing a few smaller, flat pieces in my bra, and the toes of my shoes, The rest I concealed in my handbag in a zipper compartment, with



makeup articles on top. Not very enod-but the best I could manage. By the time Lady Ellen came upstairs, I was calmly putting finishing touches on my makeun. If she or anyone discovered that my jewel box was empty-well, that was a chance

I had to take "Lisa, it's my duty to warn you," Lady Filen began without further ado. "We cannot be responsible for you if you insist on going with this

I decided to play it cool, and laughed gaily. "Oh, you mustn't worry so! It's funny-I always thought European girls were so liberated, but it's not like that at all. We American eirls have much more freedom, from what I've seen, and I think we know how to handle it Now, how do you like my dress?" I

whirled about in the filmy flowered chiffon, one of my favorites "Charming," she murmured, but she wasn't looking at me, but gazing out the window. Then, strangely, she added the words my own mother-and so many others-had used so many times: "Better take a

it! And how ironic that this woman, whom I regarded as my mortal enemy, should remind me of it! Of course, if my half-formed plans succeeded, I'd need a warm coat

more than anything! I managed to make a gay exit. rabbing a warm coat and even kissing Lady Ellen lightly on the cheek, telling her not to worry. Then,

as fast as my feet could carry me, I rushed off to meet Nicholas. I found him on the terrace, talking excitedly to Celeste in French couldn't catch what they were saying, as I approached, but it had

something to do with the cliffs "I will see to it this afternoon Monsieur," Celeste was saying as I joined them. The look he gave me

was pure hatred. Why? "Please, dear God," I prayed in

my heart, "let me get past those gates. Give me a chance to live and find the murderers of my parents Outwardly. I made an effort to keep up the gay banter I'd begun successfully with Lady Ellen Inwardly, I sighed with relief as the Rolls, with only Nicholas, the chauffeur and I as occupants, passed heavily barred gates that Celeste

opened. I was free! Or was I? No sooner had we driven down the steep, winding road to the town of Villefranche Sur Mer below, than I realized that we were not headed for Nice at all, but in the opposite direction-toward Monaco, and the French-Italian bordertown of Menton

Don't panic, I kept telling myself. I had to go on with the innocent act, "Where are we going?" I asked, trying to sound as if it were all a

great lark. "This isn't the way to Nice!" Nicholas smiled at me, but now, all the compliments and gaiety, even the fierce passion of his nature

seemed to have left him. He looked He took my hand gently. "This is all for your good, Lisa," he said enigmatically. "Trust me ... you

will see." Trust hin? I was sick of being kent in the dark sick of all the mysteries Somehow, I decided, I just had to get myself out of the car and run for it. A chill ran down my spine when it



Yes, I went to college. But Speedwriting got me my job.



An Educational Service of ITT Our chauffeur, separated from us

by a thick pane of glass, was driving with speed and expertise up the narrow, winding road that led to the footbills of the Alos Now, dusk was beginning to fall. and the small towns along the way were becoming fewer, and farther anart. I drew my coat about me and rested my head on the back seat. pretending to nap. Sooner or later, I reasoned, we would have to stop for

dinner. Until then, there was nothing I tried to formulate some kind of plan. If I could succeed in my escape from Nicholas, what then? To go to the police with my story was out of the question. It would be all too easy for the Thorndykes to

claim that I was a bit unbalanced due to the tragedy of my parents' death, and take me back into their Somehow, I had to get to Zurich. I remembered that my father had a

business friend there, a German art dealer of whom he was very fond. He was an old gentleman. Hers Friedrich Von Zandt, Once, when I was very small, he had given me a lovely Swiss music box With his white hair and beard, I always

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City___ State Zio

> thought he looked like Santa Claus Years had passed since then--he might be dead. Still, there was a chance. In any case, I had to find the dealer in Zurich who had agreed to sell my father the carrings that matched my mother's brooch And now that I was free (almost!)

I could finally reach my father's executor, John Allenby, in London Lulled by the smooth motion of the Rolls I relaxed, and for the first time since the accident, felt that everything could be resolved happily. after all I woke with a start, to find my

head nestled against Nicholas' chest, his arm around me! "W-where are we?" I gasped. The car had stopped. I could see lights

outride Nicholas drew me close for an ins tam, and kissed me lightly on the forehead "We're outside one of the best restaurants in Switzerland," he said. "Frankly, we've just been sit tine here for a little while, because I didn't have the heart to wake you." "Oh. dear?" I wailed, sitting up quickly and trying to smooth my disheveled hair. "I am sorry!"
"Don't be," Nicholas said. "You look so lovely when you are asleep. It

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"To my sister's home in Gstaad," Nicholas replied promptly, much to ony surprise He seemed to have thrown off some of his depression, and put on his mask of debonair pleasantry again. "I know summer is no time to visit Gstand," he laughed. "We should be going there in winter, when we could enjoy he sking. It's marvelous. But I do want you to meet my family. My sister Melina is

same road toward the Swiss Ales

that my purents had taken on that

"Where are you taking me?" I

tried to make the question sound

casual I couldn't arouse his suspiciors.

fatal journey, Why?

all the family I have, and we are very close. I hope you will love her. "I'm sure I will," I said, eager to please. But Nicholas didn't seem to hear. Once more, he had retreated into his own dark reverie

Why hodn't he told me, in the first place, that this was his plan? Why had he told me ur were roise to Nice? It could be that he was afraid to ask me to travel such a distance. but he might also have more sinister motives.



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was a pleasure to see you like that." Once more, my heart softened, and for a moment, I was tempted to tell him everything. But as I became fully awake. I steeled my mind against him. He had come into possession of my mother's priceless broach but had told me nothing. So-be could not be trusted, or truly devoted to me. So-I had to eather my wits and ect away from him-row?

The restaurant was typical of many of the best in Europe-not large or flashy, but with delightful ambience and impeccable service. The dining area, where waiters moved quictly and swiftly, shone with fine white liners and gleaming salver. A rich, red brocade covered the walls, and long French doors looked out upon a lovely vista of flowering shrubs and a fountain, lit by several torches

The earden might be a way out . . but I'd better not rush it, but try to get my bearings first. And I was

crests. But nearby, there were a few clusters of lights, indicating small farms or villages. The country wasn't completely desolate. If I ran for it, I could find shelter not too far away. My heart sank when I saw-that the earden was surrounded by a very high wall. Another setback-of course, my coat had been checked

Already, the nights were quite cold and I would need it. The only way out was to make a break on our way to the car after

dinner. Send Nicholas back to find something I thought I'd left Then-RUN! And-HIDE! When we finally got through

dinner, and were sipping our esgresso. I realized that all my attempts at bright conversation and my praise of the excellent cuisine of Northern Italy had been in vain Nicholas sighed deeply. "I feel that we are not-how shall I say?-en capport, Lisa, There is something troubling you, which you do not feel you can confide in me. Of

At last, we stopped at a Swiss inn for dinner. The country was deserted, but I had to run for my life!

hungry. With so little cush, it might be quite a while before I could eat aguin.

"Please order for me," I told Nicholas, "I'm sure whatever you choose will be superb. But shouldn't we call the Thorndykes first? They'll be terribly worried when I don't come back on time."

Nicholas rose from the table abruntly, "Yes, of course," he said "But I will call and make the apologies-after all, it is my fault." After giving our order to the waiter in rapid French, he left Quickly, I asked where the ludies'

room was As usual, it was an antunusted conversion from an unstairs boudoir, far from the eleaming porcelain and rows of telephones of its American counterparts. The only telephone was connected

with a small switchboard downstairs. Did I dare use it? I had barely enough money to make a call to John Allenby, and it was doubtful if I could reach him Besides, I'd have to pay at the desk downstairs, and that might give away my whole scheme! Though it was quite dark now, there was a bright moon, and looking out at the surrounding countryside, I could see the contours of the forbid ding Alps and their snow-capped course, it was very gauche of me to play this trick. My only desire is that you bear with me until we reach my sister's home, where I am sure all our

difficulties can be resolved." He looked so sad that I was overcome with remorse at the thought of my desperate plan. Impulsively, I reached across the table, and put my hand on his. "If it is to be." I said. looking directly into the un-

fathomable depths of his dark probing eyes, "then I am sure it will While we waited for our coats, I managed to slip off one carries and drop it into my purse.

Outside, the chauffeur had pulled up to the entrance, ready and waiting, and jumped out to open the door "Oh, Nicholas," I cried, "I've lost

one of my earrings! I must find it They were a gift from my parents "Stay here in the car," he said "I will have the people make a search. I'm sure it will be found

"Perhans it's somewhere in the parking area." I said to the chauffeur, after Nicholas had gone mside. "Let's look. You cover that side, and I'll cover this one."

Dutifully, he began to look over the ground on one side of the parking area, which was quite well lighted And I did the same on the other. But as soon as I reached the edge of the lot, I ducked around the corner of the building, and ran into the open

It was rough and full of stones, and I was grateful that I had worn a pair of comfortable shoes with low platforms I was thankful too for all the training I'd had on the track and basketball teams in bieh school

and college. The moon was high and bright now. I had to run for the woods on the other side of the open field, as fast as I could, to escape detection. Just as I reached woods and at last roused for breath. I could hear a commotion at the inn, and saw people running out. Then-does

barking! They were some to set them on my trail! Terrified. I plunged blindly through the woods, until suddenly, my foot slipped. I had almost rushed headlone into a mountain stream!

And behind me, I could hear the does coming closer Once more, my New England upbringing-or maybe it was watching TV westerns-came to the rescue I remembered how the Indians would wade into water to keen nursuing animals from following their scent Quickly I took off my shoes pulled

arron to hold them and my precious hae and stepped into the stream The sen-cold water was shocking the bottom full of rough stones, but I managed to inch my way along the bank for quite a distance. My heart sank when I heard the dogs, quite close, and Nicholas' voice shouting,

Allows! Vite! Now I could see them at the edge of the bank, upstream. All I could do was cringe in the shadows, close to the bank, to stay out of the moonlight. And I had to stand very still, though the icy water was freezing my legs, it seemed, to the

At least, I was relieved to see that the Indian trick worked. The dome had lost the scent and stood there, barking in utter confusion. Now, I couldn't waste a minute. I clambered out of the stream, slipped on my shoes, and ran. Vaguely, I grasped the fact that I must make my way back toward the fields, for there, near the cultivated land. I might find at least a farmhouse. To go further into the woods would be disastrous for I might perish of cold, exposure





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and hunner At last, I came out at the edge of a

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clearing, and I've never seen anything so welcome as light shining from the windows of a farmhouse, not very far away. Staggering and stumbling over fields, I made my way to it as fast as I could. As I drew near, I hesitated. Should I knock holdly on the door, on the chance

that these people might believe my story and take me in? Or should I hide out in the barn? I didn't have a choice. As I might

have known, they had dogs, too, who set up a howl as soon as they sensed my presence

The door flew open, and a big burly man rushed out, carrying a shoteuni "Who's there?" he demanded in

Italian, accompanied by a string of choice curses My Italian is not too good, but I'd picked up enough in my yearly visits with my parents to communicate fairly well. I'd also learned a lot

Papa frowned, "There was a man here last night-a Greek, with an expensive car. He is the bad one you were running from, no?" Nicholas! I nodded driectedly. It

seemed he wouldn't let me go easily. "We said we knew nothing." Papa went on, "but I think he might come back. We must get you on your way

to Zurich. Then he smiled broadly, "I know! This is the day my brother Salvatore makes his trip to the city with the vegetables. He always stops here, to

pick up ours If you don't mind riding in a dirty, old truck-" "Oh no!" I cried. Anything to get away from Nicholas

In a short while Salvatore ar-

rived, a jolly, somewhat younger and thinner edition of his brother Mama and Paru Abandola embraced me warmly as we left, and Mama handed me a big basket of cheese, fruit, crusty Italian bread and

The police wouldn't believe me-somehow, I had to reach my father's friend. But could I get there ?

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about the warmth, generosity-and romantic nature-of the Italian peo-

No sooner had I explained that I had been forced to flee from an overamorous suitor, who had threatened to kill me (which wasn't far from the truth), than I found myself hustled into the house and upstairs to a comfortable bedroom, where I was urged to change from my wet clothing into

a voluminous flannel nightgown by the farmer's wife, and get into bed. Then she bustled off to get me some het soun-after telling me, with anpropriate gestures, about the dire fate that would befall anyone who might try to take me away!

The minestrone was delicious, the bed wonderfully warm and comfortable, but best of all was the feeling that, after so many weeks, I was free-and with friends

Just how good those friends were. I discovered the next morning, when I woke to find my clothing washed and pressed, and in no time, found myself telling my story to Papa and Mama Abandola (as they insisted I call them), while they plied me with steaming coffee and Italian postries.

Mama cried a bit when I told them about my parent's tragic death, and how I must get to Zurich to try to discover their murderers

wine for our lunch. I tried to get her to accept one of my dasmond rings, but she refused-"It's too much!" I determined that some day, somehow I would find a way to repay these wonderful people

As we set out in the rickety old truck, I looked back for a last glimpse of them-and to my horror saw the Rolls comine down the road behind us. What a parrow escape! Well, I thought, he'd never look for me in this old rattletrap full of vegetables

Salvatore drove with speed and abandon, and was soon singing at the top of his voice. In my new-found freedom, I relaxed, and even hummed along with him. Now we were climbing high into the mountains, up steep grades and around tortuous curves, and the scenery was breathtaking

It was on one of the curves that the old truck, its engine forced to the limit by the hard climb, suddenly stalled. And in that instant, a car rammed us in the rear. I screamed as I felt the truck crashing through the

Through the blackness. I heard a familiar voice: "Lisa . . Lisa darling

Lisa It aroused me, if only for a moment. Nicholas! Once more, he was

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**WHUNDY

For Old Time's Sake.

there, holding me tenderly. Once more, he had saved me! When I regained consciousness, I was in a hospital room, a nurse in starchy white hovering over me. A strange reaction penetrated my foggy

brain: Why did she look so familiar? My body ached all over. My arm was bendaged, "W-what happened?" I whispered. "You're going to be all right," the murse said, smiling. "A slight concus-

sion, a lot of brusses, and a broken arm we'll have to set when you feel up to it. You were very lucky—you were thrown clear of the track." A wave of fear chilled me. "And ... Salvatore?" I managed to gasp. The nurse smiled broadly now.

The nurse smiled broadly now.
"Not a scratch! He must lead a
charmed life. And the man who ran
into you paid for all his vegetables,
with enough left over to buy a new

truck!"

I sank back on the pillow.

Nicholas, again! So—it was he who
had rammed us. Accidentally, or

Nicholas, again! So—it was he who had rammed us. Accidentally, or . . . on purpose? "He wanted to see you, but the

doctor told him to go home and get a good rest. He sends you his best regards."

"Thank you," I said. Dear Salvatore! How glad I was that he wasn't hurt!
"The other gentleman wants to see you, too," the nurse continued, "but

first, you'd better see the doctor."

I tried to gather my strongth and get my wits about me. I had to tell the doctor my side of the story, before Nicholas and the Thorndykes talked him into making me go back

with them!
To my amazement, in walked Dr.
Gaspardi Now I knew why the nurse
had looked fameliar. This was the
same clinic where my father had
died—and Dr. Gaspard had attended

I managed a weak smile. "You must think accidents run in our family," I said. "Thank heaven this one is not so

strious," he said, with a smile. "Now tell me—how do you feel?"
"I feel desperate," I blurted.
"Doctor, please help me."

"But my dear young lady, what is the trouble?"

As fast as I could say them, the words came tumbling out—all my fears and suspicious from the time

my parents died.

The dector looked thoughtful, and said nothing. Probably he thought these were merely the demented ravings of a person near hysteria.

"You don't believe me, do you?" [

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 deminded. "Well, please, please, do me one favor. Let me call my father's executor in London right now. They haven't permitted me to contact him. I must reach him, and I'm going

to—if I have to run out of the place!"
"Now, now, you must be calm,"
Dr. Gaspard said "Mr. Nikonos says you ran away before. Was it for the same rassoe?"

"Yes!"
"Well, then, I see no harm in your
making this call, especially since
you've had a slight concussion, and
excitement is not good for you."

"Then let me call right now!"

The doctor sighed. "Very well."

He called the nurse, who brought me a phone on a long extension cord

When, at last, I reached John
Allenby the doctor urned to leave.

Allenby, the doctor turned to leave.
"No?" I called "I want you to talk
to him, too!"
It turned out that John had
received no word from anyone about

the accident! He was completely shocked and angry. He assured me that he'd fly to meet me just as soon as he could get all the papers in order. In the meantime, he would send money to the

and until he arrived.
"Will you please explain all this to

Dr. Gaspard!" I asked sweetly.
"And thasky you so much."
I couldn't help but feel both
amused and triumphant as I watched
Dr. Gaspard's expression change
from skepticism, to astonishment, to
chagrin, while he listened to John
Allenby's trande. When he hung up
the phone, he looked completely
shaken.

shakers. It is actioned fig. Misc. Levell's he and "It appears that your parents' deaths may actually have been homised? Please believe that I will cooperate with the authorities in any sor care flat authorities in any sor care flat flat your arm and set it. Then you must have complete react, they have way, do you wish to have Mr. Nikononia-formed of those developments? Of formed of those developments? Of promed of these developments? On prome of the prometer of the property of the propert

tett here since we brought you in."

Concerned Sure—but for his own
interests. Still, now that I had the upper hand at last, there was no reason
for silence. In fact, we might learn
something from his reaction.

After the ordeal of setting my arm and putting it in a cast, I fell into a deep sleep, and didn't awake ustill the next morning! When I did, I found my room filled with flowers, and in the midst of them, dozing as a chair, was Nicholas!

He scemed to sense that I was watching him, for he awoke with a start, and rushed to my bedside. "Of h. Lisa." he said, "I had no idea of the terrible ordeal you have been going through Now that Dr. Gaspard has told me about it, I want to do all I can to help. But why didn't you conflide in me? Why did you run

It wasn't just the flowers, or the ring of sincerity in his voice. I had to admit to myself that what drew me to him was the tenderness, the strength I had felt before. I had to admit that I was in love with Nicholas Nikenous Bus the practical, New England side of my nature. New Sendand side of my nature warned me that I should say nothing until the proper investigations were mode.

n I took his hand in my one good n one, and said gently, "Remember when you asked me to trust you? I



had And now. I must ask you to trust me-for a little while. And thank you for all you've done-including saving my life for the second time!

He covered my hand with kisses, held it against his cheek for a moment, and said, "I will trust you, Lisa. I must, because I love you.

He left the room gaickly, and I felt a little piqued when I learned that he'd stormed out of the hospital.

though I couldn't say I blamed him. In a few days I was well enough to leave for Zurich, where I was to meet John Allenby-but not before going through an exhausting, and at times harrowing, investigation of my parents' death by the Swiss police I told them about the missing brooch and earrings, and how the brooch here. I doubt if it will make you feel any better." he added wryly, "but they've had your friends, the Thorndykes, under surveillance for some time. They were about to close in, but then, you flew the coop, and there went their best witness!"

I ground, "Oh, what a fool I've been!" Then I felt my heart beating fast as I asked, "But Nicholas Nikonos-how did he get the

brooch?" He shrugged "He is innocent. He bought it from the Thorndykes for a stiff price, sure that they were reputable dealers. And they were The people you know were not the real Lord Cecil and Lady Ellen, but imposters. I have a hunch that the

real Thorndykes were buried many years ago." I shuddered, overcome with

How could I accuse him now? Yet I was certain that Nicholas was involved in the plot to destroy me!

had responsed as a gift of Nicholas Nihonos I told them about my father's mysterious last words, "Stop them . get the letter." They were baffled Their thorough search of the wreckage had revealed no sewels or letter. One thing would substantiate

my story-finding the brooch in the soree They would ask the French police to cooperate by making a search. In the meantime, nothing could be done. I was relieved to meet John Allenby in Zurich-crisp, dapper and ef-

ficient as always. To my surprise, he ushered me to a quiet corner of the hotel dining room, ordered coffee, and asked abruptly, "Miss Lowell, did you know that your father was a secret agent?"

The idea of Daddy, wealthy urt dealer and one of the distinguished Lowells of Massachusetts, being a secret agent made me burst out laughing "Whoever gave you that iday" I asked.

"Scotland Yard," he replied, and instantly I became as sober as he was After your call, I thought it wise to seek their advice because of the suspicious nature of his death. To my amazement, they told me that he had volunteered to work with the internutional police to work with the international police in an effort to break a ring of jewel threves who have been operating very successfully

remorse because I'd treated Nicholas so badly. Dear Nicholas! I must find

I rushed unstairs to my suite. determined to call all Europe, if need

be. Not far behind me rushed John Allonby, waying papers and gastring, "But you haven't read the will!" Outside the door, we both stopped cold, at the sound of loud voices inside my suite. Voices I knew well!

There were some words we couldn't understand, then Nicholas' voice, shouting, "You can kill me if you must, but let Lisa go free!" "Wait I'll get the police," John whispered, but before he could ston

me. I was halfway through the door. shouting, "No! No!" There was Lady Ellen, disheveled

and half-crazed, brandishing a sharp axe! I froze as she turned on me. shricking. "You couldn't keep out of this! Now you'll die!" Swiftly, Nicholas moved behind

her, pinning her arms and forcing her to drop the axe. Just then, John Allenby arrived with the police, who moved in fast and hustled hwe away. They'd already caught Lord Cecil, heading for the apartment with a

gun! A search at the villa later turned un the missing corrings, as well as the brooch Daddy had intended to use them as a lure to tran the Thorndykes, but being rather an amateur

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secret agent, never dreamed of the dreadful lengths to which they would go.

Suddenly, the hysteria was over, as all the police filed out of the room, leaving John Allenby, Nicholas and me with only an admonition that we must keep them advised of our whereabouts, for we would be needed for further questioning.

No sooner had the door closed. than I collapsed in Nicholas' arms. "Oh, darling, darling," I murmured, my head buried against his chest, "how can you ever forgive me!" Gently he lifted my face and looked deen into my eyes, wining my tears away gently with his handkerchief "What is there to forgree?" he asked, his own voice close to breaking "The courage that led you to question my motives and defy them so magnificently, when you had every right to do so? The wonder of finding a woman so selfless that a few moments ago, she rushed to save me, when it might have cost her own life?"

He drew me close, and now, with his face against mine, we could feel our tears of joy in our new-found love, flowing and mingling, unashamed

"Lisa ..." Nicholas whispered.
"You are the answer to my prayers,
the woman I had nearly given up
hope of ever finding. Lisa ... will
you marry me?"

It was as if my whole being responded as I cried, "Oh, yea' N est". Then our jus met in a long, lingering kiss that, more than any ceremony, sealed our vows of love forever, sealed our vows of love forever, ing, halferping—two of the happing, halferping—two of the happing, halferping—two of the happing to lovers in the world. Nicholaspie et lovers in the world. Nicholaspie me to the couch, and insisted that I fie down. "You've had a dreadful time, my darling," he said. "Now. I'll call for tea and brandy to be sent

up, and we'll all relax a bit before dimer." Discreet as always, John Allenby had disappeared into the bedroom where we could hear him talking on the phone. Now, after a heastant peek to make sure that no more passionate leve scenes were going on.

"John, please!" I begged. "Tell us what you learned What I'd like to know, first, is how the Thorndykes got into my suite!"

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RE YOU UNLUCK where directs seem NOW YOU CAN GO SOME

ANY PHOTO F of Art Husber, Pay 158, Oart, 156, Princeles. ing to take another sip of brandy, "The minute they realized that you weren't going to come back to the villa with Nicholas, they suspected that you or both of you would come back to the scene of the accident to investigate your parents' death. So they drove to the clinic with the idea of claiming that you were still unbalanced from shock and should be returned to their care. But when they got there, they were confronted by this person-" he smiled at Nicholas-"and Dr. Gaspord. both of them now convinced that the Thorndykes were villains-but alas. at that point they had no evidence to hold them. So the Thorndykes drove off triumpantly, and came here. figuring, quite correctly, that when you were released from the hospital you would come here to continue the investigations. They knew your parents always stayed at this hotel. Then when they found you were

door ' "Oh!" I gasped. "Then they came in from the adjoining terrace!" John nodded "Exactly. And

"That was easy," John said, paushad

waited there to kill you. They'd decided bullets would be too obvious-that's why Lady Ellen had the axe. They planned to threaten you with it, then cut your wrists to make it look like suicide." I shuddered, and reached for Nicholas' hand, "B-but, they were

stammered. "W-weren't they?" "Yes," John said soberly, "At that point they had no choice. They realized how much he cared for you, and that, with all his resources, he

would never let them go. They didn't know he would come ketocking at your door so soon. But when he did they knew they couldn't back down." I plend closer to Nicholas and I think both of us were a bit numb. thinking of the narrow escape we'd

"Thank God," John Allenby said with more genuine feeling than I'd thought him capable of, "we got here

registered, they took the suite next-Nicholas smiled, "I have a good idea," he said. "I think we should all leave this place, so filled with terrible memories, as soon as possible. And I can't think of a better place to go

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than my sister's villa at Gstaad. She will be most happy to have you both Impulsively. I took his hand. "Oh. Nicholas," I said, "if I'd only trusted you, and gone with you to your

sister's, so much of this terror might have been avoided." "No, Lisa," he said. "I think, in some strange way, it was meant to be Because until the Thorndykes were brought to justice, there would

have been barriers of suspicion between us. Now-" he looked deen into my eyes-"there are no barriers nt all." "No." I sighed blissfully

snuggling my head against his chest. We drove to the villa of Nicholas'

sister, Melina, the next morning. It was a dream home, high in the mountains, furnished with every I liked Melina instantly. She was I imagined, a few years older than I. and her face, while not beautiful, as

Nicholas' was hardsome, was sensitive and expressive When she smiled, she seemed to be filled with an inner radiance that lit the whole room-and she smiled warmly, when Nicholas introduced me as his future wife

I am so happy," she said, "I was afraid my brother would never find someone like you." My heart went out to her. I could

some her own unhappiness, with the same problem that had faced Nicholas-would a mun ever love her for herself? I could tell that she had met only fortune-hunters, and was determined, that, somehow, I would help her to find harminess

We sat in the living room at the villa. Nicholas and I. dutifully listening to John Allenby, who had finally got to read my father's will like a true London barrister, though while John pored over the papers, we stole quick, delicious little kisses. At last, he finished, and summed up, seriously, "What this means, Miss Lowell, is that everything

belonging to your parents goes to you. There are no other hears. "I'm not so sure." I said "Why, what on earth do you

mean?" John was clearly unset. He hated anything that wasn't absolute-"Just what I said," I answered

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